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LITTLE WHITE LIES

Truth & Movies

CHINESE FILM

中国电影特

愛活學習識

2001

SPECIAL ISSUE



PLUS • REVIEWS • INTERVIEWS • WISDOM



DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION BY
PAUL WILLOUGHBY

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Now is the time

AUTHOR AND CRITIC MARK COUSINS TRACES THE ROOTS OF CHINESE CINEMA'S GLOBAL RESONANCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

This much we are told:

China is the fastest-growing economy in the world, the next superpower. Economics prime and esthetic. In everything from the *New York Times*, to *Foreign Affairs* and *The Hindu*, say so. So does the DTI, loudly to British business. A re-appraisal of China – an attempt at understanding and harmonious relations – is taking place.

Personally I doubt that to engage with the stories and images of a country is a good way to understand it, and no art form combines story and image more elegantly than cinema. The screen in the cinema, as the lights go down, is a window opening on a world unseen. Film well placed to bring the lives and ideas, pleasure and realities, conditions and aspirations of a country vividly alive.

IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THAT, when asked by the University of Edinburgh if I would be co-associate director with Dr Dorota Górska, of 'Chinese China', their new UK-wide festival of Chinese film, I immediately said yes. More personally, for years now I have carried in my head vivid scenes from Chinese film – characters, gestures, songs, widescreen compositions, rather than feeling and cinematic subtlety – that are almost unknown in the West.

This year eight entries are set to be shown, all those who love the innovation and aesthetics of Chinese social melodrama, musicals, art movies and action cinema. When Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* won the world box office title in 2000 and, in its action scenes, seemed to defy gravity, we jeered, 'Yes, but what about King Hu's *A Touch of Zen*?' Its sword fight scenes in bamboo forests defied gravity just as astonishingly, but way back in 1967, it is one of the greatest films ever made, but people in the West hardly knew it.

When Zheng Yuanjie's *Hero* was the first Chinese film to pole position one at the American box office in 2004, we assumed that now might be the moment to tell the big, complex, fascinating story of Chinese language cinema so that more people might begin to carry its splendid moments around in their heads, which is why most of us remember *Hero*. Hence 'Chinese China', which will play all over the UK, showing 25 films from eight decades, with 26 lectures on the cinematic, aesthetic, social and political history of China.



Top: *Dame of the Golden Flower*
Left: *Venus in Fur*



WE BELIEVE THAT NOW IS THE TIME for six reasons, beyond the economic one just mentioned. The first is awaiting to do with the city of Shanghai. In the 1930s, it was a boomtown – cosmopolitan, open to the world because it was a port, and developing at an extraordinary rate. Now, in 2007, it is a boomtown – cosmopolitan, open to the world, and developing at an even more extraordinary rate. Then it was the centre of the Chinese film industry. Nearly a decade before Italian neo-realism, which every film buff knows about, Chinese movies of the 30s

– the country's first cinematic golden age – were freshly realistic in their themes, beautifully understated and brightly aware of social truth.

One of those truths then, as now, is that at times of rapid urbanisation, and the movement of vast populations, people get left behind. They wonder what the accelerated pace of life, this rapid post-modernity means, and how they square it with their more traditional values. Straight drama of the '30s – films ♦

Ide The Goddess (Wu Yonggang, 1934), the first film in the world to portray a prostitute sympathetically – register naturally the social problems and psychic penitence created by such change. And now, in modern China, films like *Unknown Pleasures* (Jia Zhangke, 2000) do exactly the same. Jump from Shanghai to Taipei to Taiwan and you find that city's most distinguished silent filmmaker, Yeh Ting-ling, is obsessed, in *Vive L'Amour* (1934) and *The Hotel* (1936), with exactly the same themes: Xinhua people, unable to connect with modern life.

SO CHINESE FILMMAKING HAS, in the last seven decades, come full circle. The second reason why Chinese language cinema is relevant now relates to the first: in a very period of social change in China, when a mass of the last century, women have been cast in central characters. Director Zheng Yinze once said, "What I want to express is the Chinese people's oppression and confinement. Women express this more clearly on their bodies because they bear heavier burdens than men." From the 1930s onwards, Chinese cinema has proved his point.

One story from that first decade jumps out. The star of *The Goddess*, Ruan Lingyu, luminously captured the modesty of her character, yet belied the abuses her life was held. Is celebrated Strength, the broads could her a loose woman and tormented her. The pressure became unbearable so, at the age of 25, she committed suicide. The New York Times carried the news of her death on page one. Her funeral procession was three miles long. She was, in her day, one of the most famous actresses in the world. Today, most film books don't even mention her.

Fast-forward to China in the '90s. Gong Li comes out of *Ao Dou* (1990) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) with the same suffering defiance as Ruan. Once again, female stories to express the agonies of social change and defiance of the old Confucian order, where women stayed at home. Both films are about homes-as-prisons. Since these films, Zhang Yimou has emerged as the newest star in Chinese language film and, to complete another circle, the wonderful Meiyue Cheung played Ruan Lingyu in *Centre Stage* (Stanley Kwan, 1992).

The third reason for looking at Chinese film now is that that stage on which women have stood so centrally, is in fact three stages.

To follow the story of Chinese language cinema, you have to jump between the People's Republic, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Maoist Revolution in 1949 caused right-thinking filmmakers to leave for Hong Kong and Taiwan. Hong Kong avoided mainland and developed a commercial filmmaking tradition. The nationalists in Taiwan repressed artistic freedom, so only after they lost power in the late '80s did master directors like Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang, and Tsui Ming-feng emerge. Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000) is about Shanghai exiles living in Hong Kong in the 1950s, people who would have grown up with the noise of Ruan. Not only did populations migrate between the three territories, but film styles did, and film styles and genres too. The peace and energy in mainland movies morphed into action and Kung Fu cinema in Hong Kong, for example. Only by tracing these migrations do we see how rich Mandarin and Cantonese cinema is.

The fourth reason to look at Chinese cinema is that a new genre has emerged: China has started making blockbusters, 'big films', in the Hollywood mode with all-star casts and an emphasis on action. The first depicts was Zhang Yimou's *Hera and the Jewel*, *Concubine of the Golden Flower*, pushes the genre further, extending the size of the cast and multiplying the decorative detail in the imagery. Zhang was a cinematographer before he became a director, so this helps explain such astonishing visuals. But, more interestingly, he studied Chinese painting too and has talked about how its motifs, its landscapes dotted with tiny characters, and its horizons at the very top of the image, have all influenced his own imagery. The new depiction films might well copy Hollywood epic cinema in some respects, but their compositions are very Chinese.

The fifth reason for taking a new interest in Chinese film can be seen in the very same films of Zhang. Western film like *Titanic* and *Troy* show how computer-generated imagery has changed the language of screens, but the Chinese, specifically Zhang, have used it both with more bonhomie and subtlety than most Western directors. In fact, perhaps in part because the Chinese film industry, like other sectors, is a command economy, the People's Republic seems to have been able to make more emphatic decisions about CGI and the digitization of film in general.



Left: *The Goddess*
Right: *Unknown Pleasures*



A whole new university is being set up to look at how digital can be combined with the more traditional visual arts. The government has announced \$10 million per year to digitise films that were shot on 35mm and are deteriorating – a service to film history which should be repeated in other countries. And, amazingly, given the ridiculous and inconsistent censorship that mainland filmmakers have had to endure, wheeling digitally, on small cameras, has fuelled underground cinema on the mainland, bringing to the screen stories and situations that previously languished beneath the radar.

THE SIXTH AND FINAL REASON why now is the time to discover Chinese film is the most profound of all. Hollywood has always been driven by action, What happens next? Hong Kong cinema has, since the '70s at least, been kinetic too, but if we draw back for a moment and look at the overall picture of Chinese language cinema, we begin to notice that action is somewhat different in it. A Touch of Zen, for example, is full of it but, also, as its title implies, movement in the movie is counterbalanced by an almost Buddhist sense of repose.

In Buddhist aesthetics, mu or 'emptiness' is a compositional element and, throughout Chinese cinema, including, notably, in such seismic breakthrough films as Chen Kuo-fu's Yellow Earth (1986), silence, ambiguity and ellipsis are as much a part of the shape of the film, its mood and effect, as action, narrative or psychology. Add to this another philosophical influence – Confucian-

which rejects both the social and gender certainties of Confucius and is very different to the class certainties of Maoism, and you get a second explanation for the profound and very satisfying aesthetic beliefs in Chinese film. It was there in *The Godfather* way back in the mid-late golden age of the 1960s and it's there, still, in the extraordinary *Gone of the Golden Flower*.

If I had to choose one film to sum up this balance, one film through which to fall in love with Chinese language cinema, it would be Fan Liao's exquisite Spring in a Small Town (1988), voted China's best film of all time by the Hong Kong Film Critics Society in 2002; its rarely seen in the West, and the print is not in great shape, but the story of a woman caught in a love triangle in a ruined town is a work of poetic realism that outshines anything made in France or Japan at the same time. In particular, the character's voiceover compellingly renders her inner life with fine grain.

Chinese cinema is full of such memorable characters, it is, surely, time to get to know them and their worlds. ■

All of the above films are showing in 'Chinese Cinema' in March and April 2007 (www.cinematheque.org.uk). The festival is an initiative of the University of Edinburgh and the Confucius Institute, managed and funded by Filmhouse Exhibitions, funded by the National Lottery, Scottish Screen and the Scottish Executive, and partnered by the Beijing Film Academy.

See page 162 for an interview with Mark Chao and 'Divided China'

CHINA CINEMA 101

WORDS BY DAVID JENKINS

Kickstart
your
collection
of Chinese
films with
this guide
to some
currently
available
classics.



PLATFORM (1996)

DIR. JIA ZHENG JI

Opening on the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1975 Jia Zheng Kei-Sim (only his second) observes the 18-year period of cultural change which then occurred in China. The film is driven together via the members of a state theatre troupe who stage propaganda plays, and whose lives are all immediately changed when government reforms encourage the cultural influence of the West. The movie *Platform* actually derives from a hit Chinese pop song released in the early 80s. It may sound light-hearted, but the film, unapologetically, moves at a snail's pace, with plenty of cinematic lingers and shots that last, for an age. The director is also considered a leading figure of the 'Sixth Generation' of Chinese directors. [AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY](#)



CHUNGKING EXPRESS (1994)

DIR. WONG KAI WAI

Just as everyone has a favourite colour Jelly Baby, people often split on their favourite Wong Kar Wai film. *Chungking Express* (the black Jelly Baby of his oeuvre) undoubtedly contains the best elements of his patented visual palette with his wonderfully woven tales of the bittersweet private reveries of regular John and Adams split into two overlapping chapters. The first deals with a despaired cop (Bleach Karwaiho) and his chance meeting with drug trafficking heroin Brigitte Lin, and occasions an inspired scene involving exploded pineapple chunks. The second involves the nervous almost-homosexual between-cop affair Tony Leung and meat-track worker Raya Wong. For fans of the Mamas and the Papas' 'California Dreaming' especially, *Chungking Express* is like a double lottery win. [AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY](#)

Raise the Red Lantern (1991)

DIR. ZHANG YIMOU

We may now make living from lavish and exuberant martial arts epics, but this 1991 period drama by Zhang Yimou's greatest work to date. As four female wives consumed dukkha it cut for the affectations of a facile master whose face Yimou never shows us, our elegiac wonder between the apparently welcoming second mistress to the banquette, opera-singing third mistress and then to Gong Li mistress and not wholly likable fourth mistress. Yimou skilfully contrasts the symmetry and fixed tradition of society in 1920s China with the troublingly asymmetrical and freely skewed notion of human interaction and love, portraying unpleasant characters who are very much the result of an unpleasant time. Stylistically, the film is equally epic, presenting the director's attention to every, minute detail. [AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY](#)

ELECTION (2005)

DIR. JOHNNY TO

This postmodern riff on the trademarked triad movie is an superbly executed examination of the roots of crime in modern day Hong Kong. Starring Johnny To regular Simon Yam as the family man who runs the Hong Kong underworld in his spare time, the film concentrates more on ceremony and ritual than gun battles and action set pieces. Indeed, there isn't a single shot fired in the film, much of the violence being dispensed via the use of blunt instruments. The title refers to the election which takes place within the triad society to find a new boss, and the hell that breaks loose when the psychopathic Big O (Tony Leung) decides to stage a coup. [AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY](#)



A ONE AND A TWO (1996)

DIR. HOWARD YANG

Alongside Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsui Ming-tang, Yang remains at the fore of the so-called Taiwanese New Wave, and to Western audiences the Altman-esque *A One and A Two* remains his most well-known work. Taking the form of a realist soap opera staged in the Taiwanese capital of Taipei (as we see most of it), this gigantic sprawling movie documents the the emotional ripples of a regular middle class family as they each face issues of varying scale and import. The terminal illness of patriarch Mu's mother acts as the nucleus of the film, her bedside visits becoming a place where the characters confess and examine their problems. The growth and gradual enlightenment of the family also acts as a metaphor for Taipei itself, with business, art, tradition and identity all competing for space in the limelight. It's a tragic and funny film with a heart as big as China itself.

AVAILABLE ON REENT, OR ALSO AVAILABLE ON VHS FOR \$19.98

REDEROV NINER (1996)

DIR. LOU YI

The blithe hair which bows through Shanghai acts as the central character to Lou Yiru's Hitchcockian psychodrama, which comes across like an Eastern riff on *Memento*. As a meandering companion film, the girlfriend as a memory, he happens one day across an ex-con who talks into his camera about the same girl, even though the two have never met. However, he chooses not to take the surreal element of the film into the easy world of Lynch, instead, offering a gentle, yet engaging vision of chaos in the city. *AVAILABLE ON VHS*

FAREWELL, AFFAIRS (1993)

DIR. MAX HSU PIA, ANDREW LAU

While many acclaimed Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* as the best remake of an Asian film to date, you only need to re-watch this original to see the cream of sophistication that still exists between the two. The pacing of the first 45 minutes is unforgivably tough. Ironically setting the scene for one of the grandest plot twists of the twenty-first century: a police mole infiltrates a group of idealistic young idealists; a detective with. Who can tumble the house of cards by answering the other first? Both daringly complex and diamond-hard, this film took offpiste to a new plateau and proved that the Hong Kong that had nurtured icons such as Ringo Lam and John Woo was still in full flight. It also produced two sequels, the first of which some consider to be an improvement on the original. *AVAILABLE ON VHS*

WWE CHI MOU (1994)

DIR. TSUI HSING-LIANG

Similar to his forthcoming *The Wayward Cloud*, this 1994 film presents the experiment block as microcosm by exploring the idea that the people we see, (let's don't forget who), from day-to-day can often shape our lives for better or worse. Considered another key player in the New Taiwanese Cinema, director Tsui Ming-tang miles nimbly yet thoroughly engaging film follows a beautiful real estate agent who has no personal life, the street vendor she sometimes picks up for casual sex, and a third salesman struggling to grasp his sexual identity. All are holed up in the same apartment, and are photographed in a series of lingering takes. The film shares similar themes of alienation and emotional frustration as Wong Kar-wai's *Ghoulgrinding Express*, but couldn't be more different in terms of style and composition. It also contains a paschal final scene.

AVAILABLE ON VHS

THREE TIMES (2004)

DIR. HOU HSIAO-HSIEN

This cinematic triptych of emotionally freighted love stories set respectively in 1966, 1991 and 2005 – all three starring the same pair of actors (Shia Qiang and Cheng Chen) – is the sensitive latest from director Hou Hsiao-hsien. As we witness the intricacies of their courtships via the context of three very different backdrops, it becomes increasingly clear that Hou's not-so-hidden agenda is to throw down some heavy concepts and bed symbolism instead of offering anything that might be described as a cerebral meditation on the nature of love/coupling love. However, his commitment to slow, unadorned takes places him squarely in the tradition of directors such as Ozu and Bresson, working, as he does, to capture life in all its joyous and miserable glory. *AVAILABLE ON DVD*

FAREWELL, MY CONCUBINE (1993)

DIR. CHEN KAIGE

This ornate period drama from "Fifth Generation" Chinese-American director Chen Kaige was lauded with praise and awards on its initial release in 1993. Watching it again now, the film still balances an expansive scope with mesmeric strength of heart, a tenderness achieved by the voice of today which, in contrast, seem to be all surface and no feeling. It opens on the harsh trappings of open school, where two young protégés are learning the trade the hard way. When they meet years later at an open houses in Peking, their friendship is rekindled until a prostitute played by Chinese heart-throb Gong Li upsets their fragile equilibrium. Successfully prizing half-a-century's worth of erotic and political history into its three hour runtime, the film works as an expensive and searching meditation between the circle of friends, as well as seeing the many discordant instances represented by the Chinese government over the years. *AVAILABLE ON VHS*



LAURA DERN JEREMY IRONS JUSTIN THEROUX

INLAND

"A PUZZLE WHOSE PIECES YOU'LL KEEP TRYING TO PUT
TOGETHER IN YOUR HEAD LONG AFTER YOU LEAVE.
ARGUABLY HIS MOST AMBITIOUS MIND-BENDER YET"

PETER TRAVERS, ROLLING STONE

"UNIQUELY DISTURBING, YET STRANGELY UPLIFTING.
NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT EXISTS"

★★★★★ LITTLE WHITE LIES

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MANDY PATRICIA, NEW YORK TIMES

"MORE OUT-THERE GENIUS FROM THE KING OF WEIRD"

★★★★★ UNCUT

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in the world today all cultures,
all literature and art belong to
the same classes and are governed by
the same political lines. There is
in fact no such thing as art for
any other, art that stands above
classes, art that is detached from
any consideration of politics.

Traditional literature and art are
part of the whole proletarian
revolutionary cause; they are, as
Lenin said, 'the soul and wheels' in the
whole revolutionary machine.¹⁹

Chairman Mao Tse-tung
Quotation from Mao Tse-tung



UWMC

Mark do you have about Chinese Cinema?

Mark Cousins:

Chinese language filmmakers do movies better than us.
They compose horizontal images better than us and they
photograph scenes better than Western directors. These are
the few of many reasons why I like their work.

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LETTERS

This month we're getting 24-hour justice protection from the eco-hunters. With all that's still subscription, but there's not enough left of the masthead

FURRY FRIENDSHIP

I am writing to you about the appalling conduct of your radio host SIR RICHARD COOPER. He is little more than a bully, not only physically but also mentally.

I have looked at his *ENTERTAINMENT* and *MUSIC* pages and find many different interpretations of potential misunderstanding on my part. At every stage I have crossed the point of complete denial on your interpretation of animal torture. I cannot let you have it another day and say what you would encourage others to "put the bitch back" from again. There is no change in the language of GILL MILLIGAN. IS SHE NOT THAT BLIND AGAIN? THE RIDDLE IS good and simple. DON'T BE AN IDIOT IN IT.

THIS IS HUMILIATING AND PATHETIC TO YOU ALL.

TYPE SHOVELS IN BY AND LARGE EXPERTS IN THE VIOLENCE ARE TO BE APPRECIATED WITH THE CHILDREN WITH YIELD PRECAUTIONS. A POSITION ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH IS A WHOLLY FORGOTTEN THING. I believe that art and darkness are leading movements in our SOONER HISTORY. THIS IS NOT

WHAT YOU WANT. DELIGHT IN ONE OF A HIGH-LEVEL MASTHEAD WHICH ARE DISMISSED AND REFERRED TO OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

THIS ARE THE CHILDREN WHO WANT MORE. DON'T I AM WILLING TO TELL YOU WHO YOU WANT. ACCORDINGLY RESPONSIBILITY WITH THE OWNER. SO I WOULD ASK YOU AGAIN, HOW CAN YOU SILENT THEM?

George Matthews

24 IN OUR SILENCE BELIEVE THAT THE ARTICLE IN QUESTION IS CLEARLY TRANSPARENCY AND, IN GENERAL, TRANSPARENCY, MAKES QUITE STREAMLINED PRACTICAL RESULTS FOR THE PRACTICE OF LEAVING NO SPACES. HOWEVER, AS THE SITUATION IMPLIES, OTHERS TAKE A DIFFERENT VIEW, AND WE RESPECT THEIR RIGHT TO BE MINDFUL OF UNLAW OPTIONS. PLEASE DON'T HUMILIATE OUR OFFICE.

BEGINNER'S LOVE

Thought I'd write to say I picked up my book *WEDDING* (left). Having recently become a dad for the second time, I didn't realize just how much wisdom he just an amateur could give. This inspired me to start *BOOK TALKING THE BUDGET*.

FOPP FILM CLUB

Wanting where all your mates have been on Tuesday nights? Come and join them at the Fopp Film Club, hosted by UKCinema in the basement crypt of Fopp's flagship store on Oldham Street. Great food, Walsh great movies for free, free a drink and maybe even meet the wild sparrow guest: 2006 new director Guillermo del Toro and David Leitch join us for a chat, and lots more surprises, even more surprises and great times. You really don't want to miss it.

For more information check out www.ukcinema.co.uk/filmclub.html.



TELE-AD WHO WOULD HAVE DARED TO GO ON TO THE PANTOMIME HORSEHEAD, *GOOGLE* AT YOUR SERVICE.

Tony

RE: STUPID TELE AD FOR THE BAA-BAA BLACK SHEEP, THE REASON THAT SHOULD ABSOLUTELY BE OBVIOUS.

BERNAL NOT BANAL

PLEASE ENJOY JOHN BERNAL'S *THE COLLECTOR* AND *BERNAL*, especially as she has done her bit to hold up the standard of the programme. She is the proper answer to the likes of *Shirley Jackson* when you ask "What's so fake to it?" *Response?* Considering her other "big" effort in *THREE* and the fact that she could so easily have been a pure documentarian who's had her cock-a-doodle-downfall at all, she's had to see a real ACTUALLY GET OVER THE SILENT CLIMATE AND GET OVER HERSELF, interesting questions like

GOOGLE GAFF

INCLUDE? But why include our members with Britain's *the* *shameless* *adult* *prostitute* *and* *LUCILLE* *ASHLEY* *OBSTACLES* *TO* *THE* *PLANET*? *What* *would* *be* *an* *old* *widower* *for* *the* *truth* *there*? *To* *die* *you* *in* *fact* *now*.

Pretty As A Picture

The photo of Rosamund, Jennifer and Kristin Scott Thomas in the *PAINT* issue, was one of the best I've seen, and like anything else ever taken in a film magazine, there was actually some substance and *plus* *valley* *over* *base* *ugly*. And in 2006, you know you managed to *monkey* *around* *why* *such* *SOULFUL* *SCHEULD* *IN* *THE* *DEAR* *great* *days* *for* *real* *times*. Paul Fleischman

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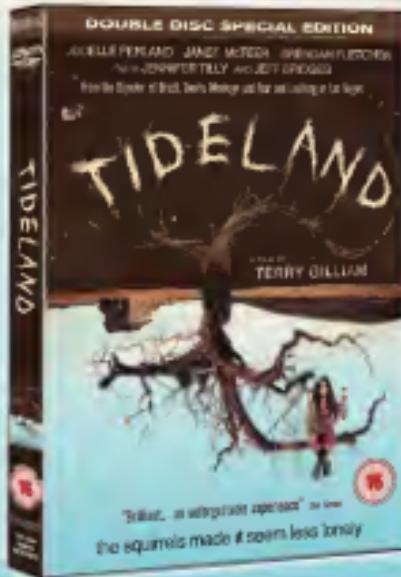
"Extraordinary,
brilliant,
remarkable"

★★★★★
Film Review

"A poetic
horror film"
David Cronenberg

"Brilliant...
an unforgettable
experience"

The Times



"As visually
compelling as
Brazil and
Twelve Monkeys...
marvellous"
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Shocking,
in your face
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What is it we love about films?

We love talking about them. We love writing about them. We love making a magazine about them.

LWL Issue 01 was slung together by a bunch of like-minded friends and colleagues in January 2009. Two years and 10 issues later, nothing has changed about the way we feel or the kind of magazine we want to make.

Our aim is to be honest, passionate, and uncommercial – while making a magazine that reads great and looks real pretty. We hope you've enjoyed it so far.

THE SPIDER'S WEB
IN THE FOREST
BETWEEN MOUNTAINS

THE IRON CURTAIN
IS BREACHED

識 The Great Wall

IT'S TIME TO REORIENT THE COMPASS OF
POP CULTURE

THE FUTURE IS
PAST

愛活學



**FREEDOM
WRITER.**

Chinese-born writer Yiyun Li became an overnight sensation when her first collection of short stories, *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*, was published in 2006. Here, she introduces an excerpt from one of those stories, *Immortality*.

INTERVIEW BY MATT RODGERS

When I was 16 years old in 1989 when I first protested through Tiananmen Square, two years later came a sort of extended military training, a government exercise to reinforce the communist ideas of China's youth. They didn't fit the model of the People's Army. She was caught reading Hemingway at a communist book class but escaped punishment and eventually escaped China altogether.

At the age of 26, she moved to America. She started writing because she was, kind of lonely, and discovered a talent for short stories that would see her first book, *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*, win, among others, the Guardian First Book Award. *A Thousand Years* is a meditative collection that reflects on life in communist China through the prism of Yiyun's American experience. Despite describing the discovery of sex (and as a rule, stories) being the collection's main theme, published in *The New Yorker*, *Jessica Al-Shay*, *Poetry* and *The Paris Review*, there's not one for an Eastern exemplified writing in a second tongue.

Through she confesses to being, a private person, Yiyun spoke exclusively to EW.com.

LWLi: What do you remember of the authoritarianism of the Chinese government when you were young?

Li: As children we were constantly aware of our parents' fear of certain things – like talking about an uncle who fought against the communist army in the civil war and later went to Taiwan – stayed within her family. There was always this flushed fear, although there was less dressing when the changes in the 80s started.

LWLi: *Immortality* is very measured, but there's anger just below the surface – would you say that's fair?

Li: Well, I'm not an angry person, so I would hesitate to use the word "anger." It's more chafement, I think.

LWLi: Can you talk us through the process of writing it? Did it bring up painful memories?

Li: When I was in China in 1984, it was the 100th birthday of Chairman Mao, and all of a sudden there was this intense admiration for his dictation. I remember seeing an impersonator of him and I was amazed and shocked because this guy had been dead for 20 years. I always wanted to write a story about this dicator's impersonator so *Immortality* became the first short story I wrote, a story with two layers, one is the impersonator and it's his story, but it's also our story, our anniversary story.

LWLi: There's a line about how the Americans will "never know of our love for them" that's emblematic of the gulf of understanding between East and West. Was that apparent at the time?

Li: Yes. When I was growing up, I thought most people in the Western world suffered, and I was so happy that we had been liberated. That was the common idea at the time, that we were going to liberate the Western world.

LWLi: When did you get a sense that that was not really the case?

Li: It came gradually. My father used to work next door to a place called The Wedding Hotel. Back then it was the only place that foreigners could live. I went there once, and on this side of the hotel was the red or the other side were white beds from Western crusaders. They were using beds. I thought that they lived in heaven! That's just an example of how I saw that they had all these things that I didn't have.

LWLi: You're yet to write in Chinese because, you've said, it was a language you never used to express your emotions. Will that change?

Li: No. I think my Chinese got stuck somewhere.

Immortality

SYNOPSIS: IN A VILLAGE A BOY IS BORN WITH THE FACE OF CHAIRMAN MAO. THOUGH HIS FATHER HAS BEEN EXECUTED FOR COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY BELIEFS, THE BOY'S FATE TAKES HIM TO BEIJING WHERE HE BECOMES, FOR HIS VILLAGE, A LIVING SYMBOL OF HISTORY AS THE OFFICIAL IMPERSONATOR OF THE DICTATOR. AFTER MAO'S DEATH, THE FALL OF COMMUNISM BRINGS THE MEANING OF THE DICTATOR'S LIFE INTO QUESTION, AND THE BOY - NOW A MAN - WILL EVENTUALLY RETURN TO HIS VILLAGE IN DISGRACE TO PERFORM A SHOCKING ACT THAT WILL COMPLETE AN ANCIENT CYCLE OF EVENTS.

The day the dictator claims the communist victory in our country, a young communist in our town comes home to his newly-wedded wife.

"It says we are going to have a new life from now on." The young wife tells the husband, pointing to a loudspeaker on their roof.

"How or aid, He is the same," the husband replies. He puts his wife into bed and makes love to her, his eyes half-closed in ecstasy while the loudspeaker is broadcasting a new song, with men and women repeating the same lyrics over and over.

This is how the son is conceived, in a chorus of Commune! so great, so great, so great. The same song is broadcast day after day, and the young mother hums along, touching her growing belly, and editing carefully the dictator's pictures

from newspapers. Of course we never call him the dictator. We call him Our Father, Our Saviour, the North Star of Our Lives, the Never Falling Sun of Our Era. Like most women of her generation, the mother is Atlanta. Not unlike others, she likes to look at newspapers, and she saves the pictures of the dictator in a thick notebook. Isn't she the woman with the greatest wisdom in our town?

The son is born with the dictator's face; a miracle unnoticed by us at first. For the next 10 years we will avoid looking at him, for fear we will see his dead father in his face. The father was a hardworking man, nice to his nephews, good to his wife. We would never have imagined that he would be an enemy of our beloved communist nation. Yet there are witnesses, not one, but a whole pub of evening drinkers.

What gets ten killed is his comment about heroes and sows. At this time, we respect the communists power above us as our big brother. In our big brother country, the Soviet Union, it is said, women are encouraged to produce babies for the communist cause, and those who have given birth to a certain number of babies are granted the title mother hero. Now that we are on the same highway to the same heaven, the dictator decides to adopt the same policy.

The young carpenter is a little drunk when he jukes ahead to his fellow citizens, "Mother heroes? My son has given birth to 30 babies in a year. Shouldn't she be granted a title too?"

That's it, a relentless attack on the dictator's population policy. The carpenter is executed after a public trial. All but his wife attend the meeting, everyone of us sticking our fists high and hailing the People's Victory, our voices so noisy cheering out the wife's name from her bed. We shout slogans when the bullet hits the young man's head. We chant revolutionary songs when his body is impaled in the sheet. When we finally lose our voices from exhaustion, we hear the boy's first cry, loud and painful, and for a moment, it is difficult for us to look into one another's eyes. What have we done to a mother and baby? Like the dead young man one of our brothers?

What we do not know, at the time, is that a scholar in the capital has been thrown in jail and tortured to death for predicting a population explosion and calling for the dictator to change the policy. Nor do we know that in a meeting with the leader of the big brother country in Moscow, the dictator has said that we do not fear another world war or nuclear weapons. Let the Americans drop the atomic bombs on our heads. We have 500 million people in our nation. Even if half of us are killed, we still have 250 million, and these 250 million would produce another 250 million in no time.

Later, when we read his words in the newspaper, our blood boils. For the years to come, we will live with our eyes turned to the sky, waiting for the American bombs to rain down on us, waiting to prove to the dictator our courage, and our loyalty. ▼





For years we do not know if it is a blessing or a disaster that a boy with the dictator's face lives among us. We treat the boy and his mother as the most precious and the most fragile treasure we have, never breathing one word about them to the outside.

"It may not be a good thing," our old people warn us, and tell us the story of one of our Grand Fathers, who happened to have the same nickname as the dictator and was thrown into a well to drown. "There are things that are not allowed to exist in duplicates," the old people say.

Yet none of us dares to say one disrespectful word about the boy's face. As he grows older, he looks more and more like the dictator. Sometimes we sit with just him in the street, there is a sense of warmth in our chests, as if the dictator himself were with us. This is the time when the dictator becomes larger than the universe in our nation. Illiterate housewives who have used old newspapers as wallpaper and who have, accidentally, overheard the tales with the dictator's name in them are executed. Parents of little first graders who have inscribed the dictator's name are sent to labour camps. With the boy living among us, we are constantly walking on a thin layer of ice above deep water.

Our young man becomes the sole face that represents the dictator in the nation, and thus starts the most glorious years of his life. Moves about the dictator, smiling at young girls, are mimed by the government run movie factory. Back in towns, we cram into our only theatre and watch the movies, secretly slaming our mothers or wives for not having given birth to a great face.

The young man is fan preoccupied with his new role to know such stories. He appears in the national celebrations for all the holidays. His most loyal audience, we sit all night long in front of the television and wait for his appearance. On the screen, men and women sing and dance with happy smiles on their faces the well-known爱国歌 (National Songs). Children four or five years old sit with one another, singing the songs like joyful peasants. At such moments, those of us who think a little more than others start to feel uneasy, haunted by a strange fear that our people are growing down instead of growing up. But the worry vanishes when our young man, the dictator's masterpiece, shows up. People on the screen stand up in ovation and hold out their hands to be shaken. Young women with the prettiest faces rush to him with bouquets of flowers. Kids swarm around him and call him by the name of the dictator. Nostalgic tears fill everyone's eyes. For a moment we believe time has stopped. The dictator is still alive among us, and we are happily living in his arms.

But time has sneaked by while we were mesmerised by our young man's face. Now we have Betty and Phoebe, we have Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson. We have imported movies in which men and women hold hands freely in the street, and they even kiss each other without a trace of fear in their eyes. Our life, we realise, is not as happy as we have been brought to think. People in these capitalist countries are not waiting for us to be their leaders. They never knew of our love for them.

This must be a difficult act for our young man as well. Biographers and reporters talk about the dictator's power overnight like spring grass. Unlike the books written collectively by the government-suspected writing groups, these books spell trouble the moment they appear. Soon they are徵ed to be illegal publications, and are confiscated and burned in great piles. Not some of the words have escaped yet, bad words about the dictator. Mouth to mouth the rumours travel, how under his reign 50 million people have died from famine and political persecution. But if you looked at the numbers closely, you would realise that is far less than what the dictator was willing to sacrifice to American nuclear bombs. So what is in the tape about?

Still, we start to think about what we have been led to believe all these years. Once doubt starts, it runs rampant in our hearts like wildfire. Our young man's face appears on the television regularly, but the fire has lost its wave. Those of us who have been waiting for his proposal are eager to see our daughters to the first after inevitable. The young man's mother, now a gaunt old woman, walks in the street and grins whenever she can to his about, none of which impresses us anymore. From the mother we have learned he is forming within the nation with our present leader, a trip designed to inspire our national belief in communism. So what? we ask, and with every before the mother has the chance to elaborate.

The tour ends early when a protest breaks out in the capital. Thousands of people rally for democracy in the centre of the capital, where the dictator's巍峨的塑像 is less and less visited. Threatened and infuriated, our present leader orders the army to fire machine guns at the protesters. Astonishing as the event is, it slips out of memory as soon as the crowd we turned to ashes in the state-supervised communism. The leader has said, as we later read in newspapers, that he is willing to kill 200,000 lives in exchange for 20 years of communist stability. Numbered by such numbers, we will echo his words and repeat his wisdom when we are required to publicly condemn those killed in the incident.

In no time the big brother country above us no longer exists. Then one-by-one cast commissars in army-like bands exit the historical stage. Confused as we are, we do not know what to think of them, whether we should stay, escape, or kill them. ■

Extracted from *A Thousand Years of Good Projects* by Yuan Li. Published by Youth Table © Yuan Li 2006.

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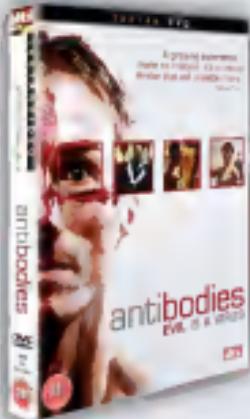


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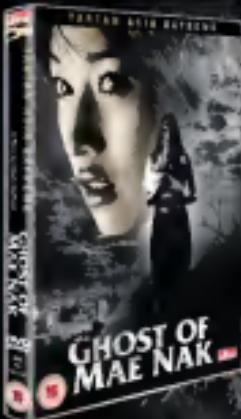
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NEVER MIND THE Bubbles

WORDS BY SUSANNE MEßMERR
ILLUSTRATED BY JUDE SEYD

When German music journalist Susanne Meßmer heard that Beijing's rock scene was about to explode, she went to check it out for herself. The result was the documentary, *Beijing Bubbles*. She gives LWM the inside track on its making.

The first time I travelled to China was in early spring 2004. When one of the friends in the group I travelled with told me there were a lot of interesting bands in Beijing, I was more than alarmed. For over two years I had been watching all the Chinese movies which were screened at the film festivals I was able to attend, and I had tried to read all the Chinese novels which had been translated into German or English. I wanted to learn everything about a country which everyone says is going to overtake us soon. As I'd started my journalistic career writing about popular culture – especially about punk and rock music – I was very keen on getting to know punk and rock music in China.

The only rock musician we had ever heard of before was Cui Jian, a guy in his forties who is said to be the godfather of rock 'n' roll in China and who used to sing protest songs during the democracy movement of 1989. But the first band we met in Beijing was Hang On The Box, and it is no wonder that they became one of the most important bands in *Beijing Bubbles*, a documentary that we hadn't even thought of until then. When we first met the girls we were simply blown away. Wang Yue, Yilin and Shengyu (who unfortunately has since left the band) were so pert, almost angelic – they knew how to dress, how to behave and what to say. They were completely unlike the older generation who we thought of as representing Chinese rock. And what we found almost more inspiring than this: they seemed to know more about cool new bands from Europe than we did. ▼



George Lippert, who was with us too, had just finished a music documentary on some German bands from Hamburg and Berlin, and he was planning to release it on the record label he had run since the early '90s. He immediately had the idea of shooting *Hong On The Box*, and from that point it didn't take long until we decided to make a documentary on young bands from Beijing.

A few weeks after returning to Germany I won quite a generous journalism scholarship. I went back to Beijing in the summer of 2004 and started to do my research. I bought all the CDs I could find – which is not a big deal in a country where a CD is less than one pound! I picked some bands I had heard of and some others whose music I found interesting, then I called them and made appointments. I called George and asked him to pack his camera and get on the next flight to Beijing.

When George arrived we had little more than two weeks to shoot, and as we didn't have a script there was no plan that we were going to follow. But we knew what we wanted to know about these bands. We wanted to know why these young Chinese people were so different from their contemporaries. We wanted to know how they'd managed to escape a society in which everybody seems to be fixated on climbing the social ladder and accumulating wealth. We wanted to know how difficult it is to be different in a country where individualism means something different than anywhere else in the world. We wanted to find out how it is to refuse to work and to consume, and to be creative instead.

When we met the first bands – only some of them were later portrayed in *Beijing Bubbles* – we were astonished at how quickly they were willing to let us into their lives. Often we met them in the early afternoon, then they invited us to their homes, introduced us to their friends or families, went out dining with us and took us to their gigs or to some gigs of other bands they knew. They asked us to meet them again the next afternoon or they called bands we wanted to meet and made appointments for us.

We had the feeling they understood immediately what we wanted from them and who we were. We were 10 years older than them but although George and I have been a couple for years, we haven't married or even started a family until now. We are still enthusiastic about living from day-to-day and doing jobs that bring a lot of fun but not necessarily a lot of money. The bands and us – we liked each other. We were at eye level. George used to wear a button during the shoot which said, I was a punk before you, and our protagonists had to laugh about it each time they saw it.

After only three days we knew that we didn't want to make a conventional music documentary about the life of these musicians on stage and back stage. Instead, we wanted to make a documentary about all the young people in China who are more courageous than others. We didn't only like the streetwise humour of these musicians. We were also impressed by the way when you look at the big things in Europe. And we said, one level of punk had fled to the other side of the world. We also thought that its pathos, its sacred seriousness and its beloved old attitudes were being given a new season d'âme in China.

We were deeply touched that it is much braver there to run around with tattoos, with strange, over-sized shirts and with a hairstyle that makes no sense to create brave working people. When they told us that they started their days with bear, and that they love to watch TV and just think the whole time, we weren't only amused but awestruck.

China is not only a fast developing society where everybody believes that education is the most important thing, it is also a country in which many people of the older generation were excluded from education for a long time. Many of them are still excluded from social advance. Even today 60 per cent of all Chinese citizens are peasants. When our musicians told us that they just want to sing, drink and fuck we were then amused, too. China is a country where prudery still reigns, where tradition from Confucius to Mao forbids talking about embarrassing things like sex. When they told us where they grow their hemp we also knew that this was more special in a country where drug users still end up in reeducation camps.

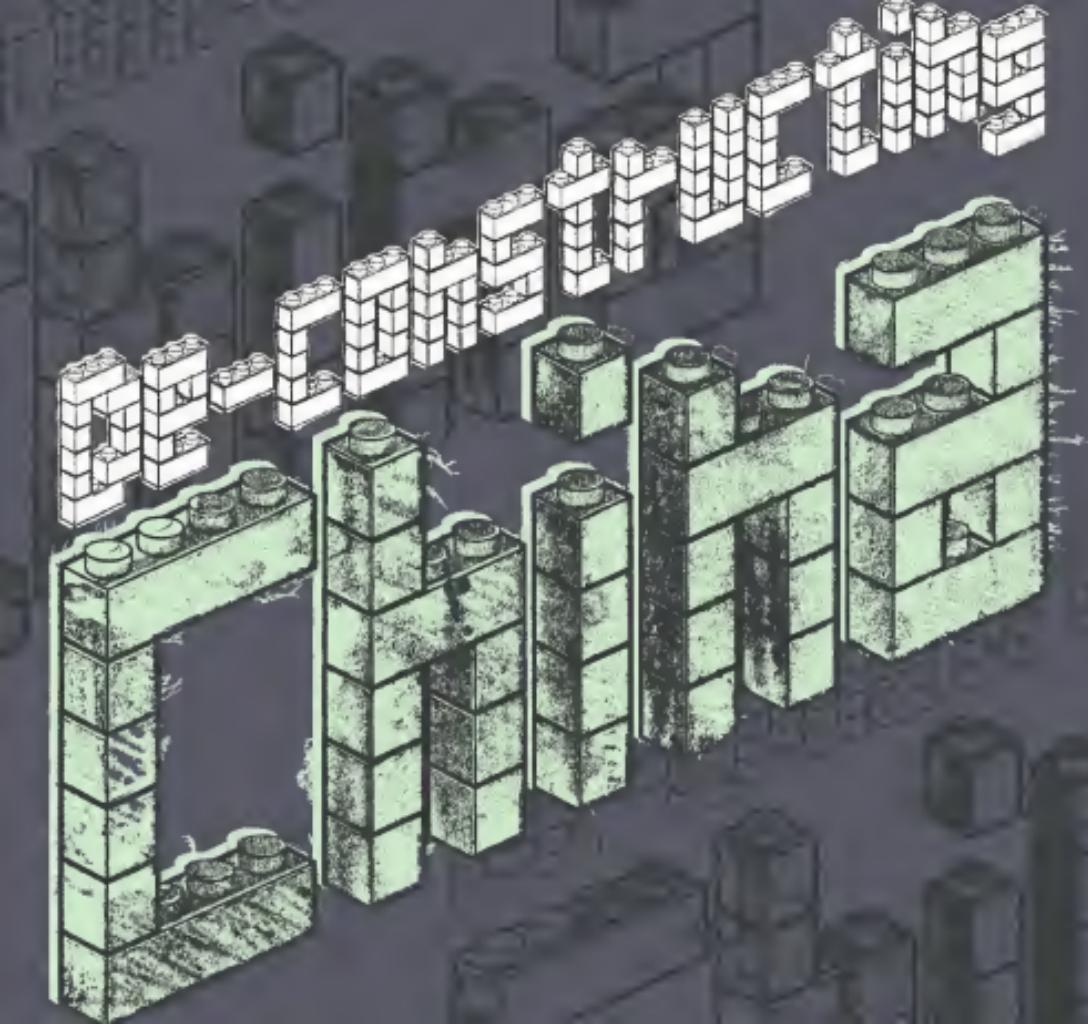
When asked what they think about their government, most of our musicians seemed to be honest. Unlike Cui Jian, they don't want to write protest songs any more. Maybe that's because they are not threatened by police crackdowns or other restrictions, but still we thought they were subversive. We found that their behaviour gave us an insight into a country where the government withdraws more and more, and where the economy gets much more and more powerful. We found the statements they made by their way of living much more meaningful in today's China than the present statements of Cui Jian.

Often they live in shabby apartments in the suburbs, far away from glitzy downtown. While drinking alcohol and hanging around, they dreamed of travelling abroad and seeing cities like London, where punk was invented. And while everybody around us in Beijing seemed busy and breathless, they always had lots of time for us.

Our musicians cannot expect to become famous or rich in the near future. There's only one independent record company, which doesn't treat their artists very well. These musicians don't find a big audience because most Chinese prefer to go to restaurants and KTV bars after work, and not to rock concerts. This is also the reason why there are only five clubs where the local bands can play, and only 20 bands in Beijing who try to make music for a living.

But still our musicians play on. They have found themselves. Maybe one of the reasons for this is that they often don't have a working-class background. Their parents are better educated than the national standard, and support them at least mentally. For these musicians, music doesn't have to be a way to get ahead. But we think they are brave and have an important function.

Like many Chinese poets, artists and philosophers before them, they seem to be more free and bolder than many others. We had the impression that a society like the Chinese needs people like them. Maybe one day they will be asked how things can be slowed down. If that happens, then they might have the chance to become a big and powerful alternative youth movement. It was this hope that gave us the idea to call our documentary *Beijing Bubbles*. For us, this name carried the dreams, the enthusiasm and the vitality of these musicians. But it carried their fragility and insecurity, too. bubbles are not very stable. They tend to burst. ■



FROM THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS TO DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN, CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS ARE PHYSICAL EXPRESSIONS OF A COUNTRY'S NATIONAL IDENTITY. WHAT IS CHINA TRYING TO TELL US ABOUT ITSELF?

WORDS BY MIKE BRETT

The ferocious reputation of Chinese workers has come a long way since the days when it took them 2000 years to build a wall. Okay, it's the only man-made structure visible from space, but the contractor said it would be done in six months.

The Jiaozhou Bay bridge may now be able to trek through increasingly large gaps in the coasting Great Wall, but China is well and truly repositioning itself as a global superpower after decades of political turmoil and economic stagnation. What's going to drive the rest of the world you never hear about? There will be a range of construction projects over the next ten years, a very breathtaking combination of technological innovation and traditional craftsmanship.

Here are four of the biggest, audacious and most breathtakingly ambitious. Together they're the story of a country via another of which it's a mirror: a modern society built by some terribly efficient and terribly relentless.

DAM THAT NATION

BY A Chinese Government Moron – Day

ENGINEER Sir, we really love the whole idea of damming the world's wildest rivers, but there appear to be more than a million people living in the way.

CHINESE GOVERNMENT Tell them to move.

ENGINEER Er... okay.

If anyone were to draw up a list of political shlockfest behind the world's biggest construction project, the scroll might be a little longer and more complex than this. Then again, it might not. In the years following the eruption of the Three Gorges Dam in 2003, the latter has proved to be the most statically unimpeachable and controversial engineering project ever. Sir Alexander Geddes-Gordon suggested building a massive dam in his native Highlands.

By the time the last reported \$25 billion official budget is spent in 2009, the dam will span the Yangtze River, generating quadruple the energy equivalent to that produced by 15 nuclear plants. More if it is the mother of all power showers.

On the dark side, it will also have forced thousands of farmers from their property and livelihood, along with 1.3 million official camp leaders who, like Robert Mugabe, look like a mix of impulsive financial vulgarism. While the class-war tactic has elicited a host of schedules, whereby large-scale plans for the new James Bond-style wonderland (somebody's interested) has also disappeared into the many world of subcontinent and (possibly) corruption. In 2005 one official was accused for skipping a cool \$1.5 million into his back pocket, which probably sounds like a fairly hefty commission if you're one of the millions of rural Chinese living on less than a dollar a day. ▶

CITIES OF GOLD

Who are the world's most fertile people? Going by recent history it's the fishermen of China's southern coastal village of Shenzhen. Just over 25 years ago the waters lapping against the shores of this municipal area supported around 70,000 residents and their families. Now they are overflowing with the chemical effluent from a staggering metropolis of 13 million people.

Dynasty might suggest that 650-fold increase in numbers has less to do with the local government's sexual policy than the industrial boom created by the Chinese government's decision to designate the city as one of four Special Economic Zones at the start of the 1980s.

In a Schumacherian Urban Survival policy, then president of the PRC Deng Xiaoping proclaimed that, 'to get rich is glorious'. With post-Cultural Revolution China threatening to bankrupt its economy, Deng's reformist, market-oriented goals made a dangerous political gamble which many critics at the time felt responsible for establishing one of the world's most dystopian cities – think Milton Keynes but with even more roundabouts.

Utterly translated, Shenzhen means 'deep channel', invariably because of the network of waterways criss-crossing the region. However, soaring levels of pollution and a steady climate undermine the name in a bad-weather setting. As the high rises have shot up from the pavements, so too has the number of permitless migrants desperate to escape China's poverty-stricken countryside for a living wage in the cities.

Unfortunately, Shenzhen's move towards a market economy has been about as orderly as the mould of a Marilyn Monroe bust. The rise of the city's rapidly acquired wealth has created mass unemployment, sprawling slum-like exploitation, and near-legislative laws of prostitution and crime. Steel of the citizens seem to go to the armed gang who repeatedly move off with an escalator from a newly-opened Metro station. Given that convicted big snitches can face the death penalty in Shenzhen, these punishing laws will surely be climbing the stairway to heaven if caught.

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Anyone old enough to remember the 'windy days of independence' will still probably recall straightjackets and latrine bags of down from the only outlet car with functioning electrics. The Qinghai railway, a product of China's controversial Western Development Strategy, is an all-too-bitter little lesson in advert for Government transport policy.

Pioneered with toilets for the new 48-hour express train from Beijing to Lhasa, the creator of Tibet will be able to sit back and enjoy the complimentary oxygen supplies as they glide across hundreds of 'Mometres' of permafrost on the world's highest railway line. As you negotiate the Renzaldi Pass the railway's highest point at 4,862 metres above sea level, just try not to heed the warnings that carbonic gases have been known to explode at the altitude, or that climate change may soon melt the layers of ice currently supporting some of the track foundations.

Leaving such reservations aside, the Qinghai rail link is undoubtedly one of the engineering wonders of the world. Unfortunately, no one thought to ask the Tibetans whether they actually wanted carriage loads of new visitors passing over for through the mountains to say is her. The cross-cultural hazard that can be witnessed by a backpacker lined with a newly-adopted iPod and internet portables is well documented. More seriously, the predicted influx of Han Chinese immigrants is already激起 among compatriots who fear that the shiny new trains pulling high-speed services is intended to hasten Beijing's political grip on their barely-independent competitors.

Amnesty has pointed out since 14 June that China's 'Joint Economic Policy' of Chinaisation, suppression of separatist ideas and delineation of power between the country's 56 ethnic minorities, has created the altitude allowing 'imperialism below' who are encouraged to settle and work from other parts of the Republic.

Economic incentives publicised by Beijing's new leaders have been used to turn Chinese subjects into the world's most resource-rich western province of Xinjiang. As the only remaining region where an ethnic group outnumbers Chinese residents, Tibet is now seen by many as the last bulwark for regionalists trying to prevent a possible break-up of the Motherland.

TAKE THE WEATHER WITH YOU

Holding the right to host the world's leading sporting event in 2008 has given China the opportunity to showcase its industrial might on a global stage. Unscathed by the decay problems of liberal democracy (like tax payers' wages), how much every day you whisper a budget projection, the China Olympic Committee has invested billions of yuan in a massive airport expansion and a generation of stadium which make the new Wembley look like the antechamber of your local bingo hall.

The centrepiece of the Olympic construction project is the Beijing National Stadium, which is designed to resemble a giantised birdcage. The multi-layered panels of the stadium's facade allow it to be weathered naturally, while robust-thick polymer panels inflate to make its roofs weatherproof should a typhoon blow it.

But there are few things as annoying as spending half a decade and hundreds of millions of dollars on a unified national identity only for it to piss down during the opening ceremony. Previous organisers have had little option but to lay out their Shakespearean leatherette stocks and stretch a tarpaulin over the VIP area. Then again, previous organisers haven't earmarked an annual budget of \$50 million for the Beijing Weather Modification Office.

Yes, you guessed it: with less than two years until the Olympic flame is lit, the Chinese state machine is now extending its jurisdiction to the clouds scudding through the sky over Tiananmen Square. By using enhancement pads to fire silver iodide into threatening-looking cumulus, 100M officials can induce nimbostratus clouds to run themselves out before they come to hover over Olympic heads. The technology isn't yet perfect, but it has already been used to good effect at the Great Panda Festival in Sichuan (unfortunately, they have yet to manageable when it gets damp). ■

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Going Over Ground

WILLIS SP/WANT/DOOMSWELL

THOUGH CHINA'S CULTURAL VITALITY HAS STRUGGLED TO KEEP PACE WITH ECONOMIC EXPANSION, THE LAST DECADE HAS SEEN AN EXPLOSION OF INTEREST IN ITS CONTEMPORARY ART. BUT AS WESTERN COLLECTORS FLOOD THE MARKET, ARE THEY DOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

Think 'Chinese art' and, chances are, you'll picture ancient artisans in silk robes scribbling on brittle parchment. Or perhaps life-size images of the Cultural Revolution, grainy propaganda posters with their femme/fasc workers ploughing fields for the Chairman.

Either way, you need to get past the program. Chinese art has undergone one radical transformation after another since the dark days of the '60s, when art's official function was to serve as a tool of politics; when, as Feng Boyi, curator of the China New' exhibition at Vienna's Esse Collection of Contemporary Art has it, art "reflected the established moral values...and exerted a substantial influence on the people's outlook".

Like everything else in Mao's China, art was a centralised endeavour, rigidly controlled by the government's thought police. Even its leader's predecessor Deng Xiaoping, encouraged a progressive economic policy in the '80s, and artists responded by pushing the boundaries of this tentative liberalism; change was stubbornly resisted by the establishment.

These are the murky roots of contemporary art in China – an avant-garde movement at odds with state-sanctioned ideology and characterised, again according to Feng (log), by a "strange power of enthusiasm and insolence". Work by the likes of Feng Menglong and Song Dong, the New liberals and Ren Jingxian, was politically and culturally engagé; it was subversive and unsafe. It was dangerous.

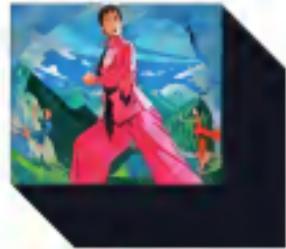
The authorities responded by shutting the artists off from exhibitions and public spaces. Beijing's China Art Gallery was out of bounds. Free Art, the Chinese Artists' Association periodical, devised the entire issue Song Dong's solo exhibition at the Central Academy of Fine Arts was closed after half an hour. Some were arrested.

So many artists went underground, but it didn't go away. In the early '90s exhibitions were held in houses, apartments and on university campuses. As travel restrictions were lifted new impetus was added by the return of artists from overseas – figures like Ai Weiwei who would breath new life and ideas into Chinese art. Eventually, as the underground scene gathered a momentum of its own, and as the government continued to find ways to suppress it, the West began to sit up and take note.

As Feng says points out, it was the authorities' very desire to stamp out avant-garde art that led to its international exposure: "Banned from public exhibitions," he says, "the artists had to show their works in basements, which made them seem more mysterious. And the more mysterious they seemed the more foreign reporters came, and the more attention it drew from the international media."

But here is where the evolution of Chinese art gets a bit sticky. The optimistic view (think of it as the short story) is that Western money and interest boosted the profile of local artists, forced the government to relax its hard-line stance and, in concert with the complicated flux of global economics, temporarily patronised a healthy, no, a rocket-powered market for contemporary art. And they all lived happily ever after. ▶

Tao Huaqin
Two As Men (1992)
© Hammer Ganz Ausstellung



Feng Menglong
Song Jiang (1991)
© Shanghai Art

Wang Guangyi
Image of Children No. 12 (1998)
© Wang Guangyi



Guo Pei
Drapes (1998)
© Guo Pei

Like most stories, there's some truth in this. As Simon Groom, Head of Exhibitions at Tate Liverpool – whose own show 'The Real Thing: Contemporary Art from China', kicks off at the end of March – points out: "The contemporary art market has gone crazy." Last February, at an auction of New Realist and New Cynical work from the mid-'90s in New York, prices went up 10 times over. Two months later at Sotheby's in Hong Kong, an oil painting by contemporary artist Cheng Lu fetched a record \$3.8 million – four times the estimate.

Guo Qianxi, Professor of Chinese and East Asian Art at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, puts it succinctly: "What we're seeing is the normalisation of Chinese contemporary art. We're moving from the phase where contemporary art was seen as Chinese art that just happened to be contemporary, to it being seen as contemporary art that just happens to be Chinese."

Why now, though? What changed to make Chinese art suddenly not just interesting but desirable? It wasn't so long ago that Charles Finch dismissed the entire country's output as "kitsch". Now his acclaimed gallery is opening its swanky new Chelsea pad with an exhibition of Chinese modern art.

Is Chinese art on everybody's lips because the art is cool and good and interesting, or because China itself is suddenly a global hot topic? Is it a case of the emperor's new clothes? "I think it's a bit of both," says Groom. "There's our fascination with the fact that at any moment China could pull in the national debt of America and the whole global capitalist system would collapse. But there's also a

lot of really attractive new stuff happening there in a way that it couldn't happen anywhere else." Stuff like? "There are no taboos of the kind that we have here, so the performance art element is really shocking; the fact that you can paint human brains and eat foetuses."

But, as both Groom and Professor Clunes acknowledge, this cosy, idealistic view of Western influence isn't the whole story. Far one thing, it's been a long, hard path to those auctions in New York and Hong Kong. Exhibitions of Chinese work have been taking place in the West since at least 1990 when Fan Daxian curated 'China: Terrain Pour Hui' in the southern French province of the Var. More strikingly, before the decade was out Feng Boi and Ai Weiwei would stage a show at the Shanghai Biennale whose title, 'Fuck Off (Uncooperative)', showed two fingers at Western art structures.

In this not-so-poly view of the evolution of Chinese art (the "long" version), Western media, collectors and critics play a far more ambivalent role.

From the outset, Western interpretations of Chinese art were distorted by the context and discourse of the Cold War. In an unpublished treatise from 1992, *Response from the Core – Thoughts from the Beijing East Village Artists*, Kang Su remembered what amounts to an intransigent manifesto in which he stated: "These artists are interested in their own existential experiences. They place importance on – the specific contexts that their works give rise to, creating only from what their own conditions permit." In other words, the artists didn't see themselves as political dissenters – they were individuals grappling with a sense of self.

Though there's a political edge to this individualism (or odds with traditional communist collectivism), with the Cold War barely thawed that wasn't enough for the crowing capitalists. They wanted, perhaps needed, these artists to stand more obviously for 'freedom and democracy', so they began to filter the market based not just on their tastes but on political preconceptions. The result was that international exhibitions would choose work based on its so-called ideology rather than its artistic merits.

The knock-on effect of this practice was even more problematic: it began to skew the whole art scene away from what the artists wanted towards what international collectors expected. Towards what Professor Clunes describes as "an accessible fraction of the exotic – stuff that plays on ideas or symbols that are going to ring a bell with audiences in Paris, but which aren't necessarily meaningful to other Chinese".

So what is the 'truth' of contemporary art in China today? In a way it's simple: there is no truth, no abstract concept of what it is. But both Professor Clunes and Simon Groom believe that too much of our thinking is rooted in outdated ideas: "There are very few exhibitions that really reflect the kind of art that is being shown in China," says Groom. "The thing you need to understand," adds Professor Clunes, "is that things are moving at such a frantic pace that issues like subjectivity and the role of the individual which were very meaningful in the '80s, are sort taken for granted now. That stuff's old fashioned."

For Professor Chua, the key is variety and competition. For Gaoon, it's the very speeded up nature of China, and the problems it poses for artists, that makes current work so interesting: "You will down the streets there and they're putting things up at a pace that you or I or most artists just wouldn't conceive possible," he says. "It must make you feel pretty alienated, but you've got to continually respond to it." In theory, that means a new generation of young artists more fully and uncrossingly engaged with the world around them than ever before.

But not everybody is so upbeat. Tania Roberts runs the Red T Space, a gallery in Beijing's artzone quarter, and her underground assessment is bleak. "Modern art is becoming less and less creative," she says. "In my opinion, at the moment there is a lack of truly original material and content." Surprisingly, she puts this down to the popularity of the market. Prices are so high and the rewards so great that the temptation for successful artists to repeat themselves is simply too much. One, Yan Jun, bought a house and car off the proceeds of only eight months of sales. "It's easier," says Roberts, "but an increasingly common pattern for young artists with a bit of luck."

Perhaps the final irony is that, just as China gets to grips with the value of its artistic heritage, and offers artists more freedom and opportunity than ever before, many of them are beginning to feel a sense of cultural desolation. As contemporary art goes underground, and the threat of imprisonment recedes, many of the artists simply don't know what to say. "A lot of artists feel slightly lost," says Gaoon. "They don't know where the limits are. Often the point of making work was seeing just how close you could come to the edge. But if things aren't getting closer down, what's the point of making work?"

That creativity should suffer at exactly the same time as huge sums of money are thrown around the world's auction rooms shows that, in this respect at least, China's artistic community is probably no different from anywhere else in the world. But for all the problems, that sense of vibrancy remains. "There's a new generation," says Gaoon, whose exhibition at the Tate includes 11 brand new pieces, and nothing at all from before 2000, "a new spirit in Chinese art." While that survives there is always hope. Fan Mao said, it only takes a single spark to start a prime fire. ■

All artwork courtesy of

CHINA NOW
The ISSTL COLLECTION of Contemporary Art
15 August 2001 – 25 February 2002

THE REAL THING: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM CHINA EXHIBITION
Date (Ireland)
03 March 2002 – 10 June 2002



Qiu Feng
(Boating (Harvest) (1994))
Oil painting, 100x100cm



Wang Ning
Door (1991)
Oil painting

made in china

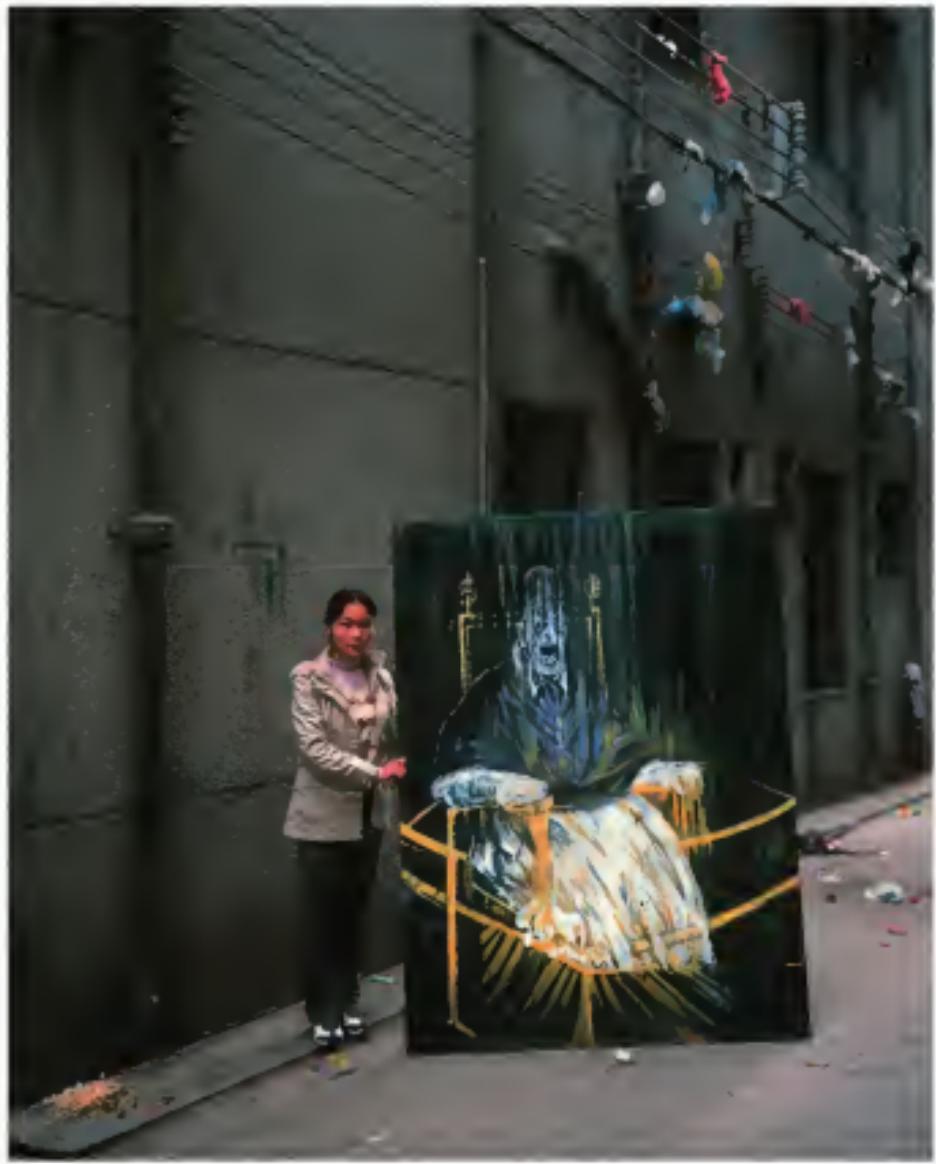
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MICHAEL WOLF

In the West, we gaze at gallery walls and ask ourselves, "What is art?" In China, where reality is all commodity controlled by the government, they ask themselves, "What is real?" These questions collide in Michael Wolf's series of searching photos. "Copy Art Fair," a document of Hong Kong's thriving market in forged art and the people who make them, what is real? What is fake? And how do we define these slippery concepts in an artificial world of global consumption, where face value is the only value that matters? Is beauty, even in art, only skin deep?









ON THE CLOTHESLINE STUDIO STAGE





WORDS BY MONISHA RAJESH

THE BRITISH MAY THINK OF THEMSELVES AS THE GUARDIANS OF THE GOOD, HONEST CUPPA, BUT WE'RE TEA-DRINKING ARRIVISTES COMPARED TO THE CHINESE.

The hallowed tradition of tea drinking is synonymous with peace, calm and reflection. But it can also be the unassuming cause of all evil. Take Zhang Yimou's *Curse of the Golden Flower*: Gong Li's Empress Phoenix is having an affair with her husband's son from a previous marriage, causing the cuckolded emperor to reap his own revenge by ordering the court physician to spike her tea with poison. Murder aside, it's a sacrilegious blow to the history of tea, whose cultural significance dates back over 3000 years.

Legend traces the origin of tea to 2737 BC, when Chinese emperor Shen Nung was sitting beneath a tree while his servant boiled drinking water. When leaves blew into the brew, Shen Nung, a renowned herbalist, decided to try the infusion which, conveniently, had come from the camellia sinensis, from which the three base types of tea – green, black and oolong – all originate.

In Cantonese culture, after a teacup is filled, the recipient may tap their bent index and middle fingers on the table to express gratitude to the person who served them. It's a custom that originated in the eighteenth century Qing dynasty when Emperor Qianlong, the greatest tea lover of them all, travelled in disguise. His servants were forbidden to reveal his identity, but after receiving a cup of tea from the emperor, one servant loaned himself in a quandary. He was itching to scratch but instead beat his fingers on the table to express his gratitude to the emperor, without unmasking him.

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), tea parties in the Forbidden City were held in Weihai Hall – known as the Hall of Literary Glory – to honour Confucius. The emperor gave tea to the lecturer and his mentors so the lecturer could moisten his throat before speaking. The whole ceremony symbolised a furthering of education. Black tea with milk was preferred, with a fixed number of cups provided directly to the royal tea kitchens.

Emperor Huizong of the early eleventh-century Song dynasty was a tea connoisseur who loved the stuff so much that he took to pouring boiling water over his suspects. Despite being a rather mediocre of state affairs (he died in prison, a broken man), the emperor's personal tea serving reflected his cultural sensitivity, and he would often compete with his subordinates to see who could make the best cup. After his rule, being served tea by the emperor became an illustrious honour.

Rumour has it that one of the first teas in China is the nuptial picked Aogamei – an oolong tea that dates to the early eighteenth century in Fujian. Another legend tells of monkeys trained by monks to pick the finest leaves from wild tea trees growing in the Niue Mountains to be presented to Emperor Qianlong. ■

forbidden

ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI'S EPIC THE LAST EMPEROR, JAMES BRAMBLE REVEALS THE INSIDE STORY OF THE GENESIS OF THE FIRST FILM GRANTED ACCESS TO BEIJING'S FORBIDDEN CITY.

ILLUSTRATION BY CRIS PETERSON

THIS YEAR SEES THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RELEASE OF BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI'S *THE LAST EMPEROR*, WHICH IS THE LAST 140 MINUTES IN ITS ORIGINAL VERSION (219 MINUTES IN THE RECENTLY RELEASED DIRECTOR'S CUT), AND COVERING 30 YEARS AND HAVING INVOLVED HUNDREDS OF Extras, LAVISH COSTUMES AND BRILLIANT CINEMATOGRAPHY BY VITTORIO STORARI. IT IS ONE OF THE LAST GREAT HISTORICAL EPICS OF THE CENTURY.

Despite the film's lack of historical significance as the first feature film to shoot on the Forbidden City – the compound of China's imperial palace in Beijing – and a canvas of Delphic-like proportions, perhaps the most striking thing about The Last Emperor is not its huge scale, but its subtlety.

Far removed from the narrative certainties of inventing historical drama, the film shuffles the sensibilities and ambiguities of both events and characters. Most notably, the film is highly ambivalent in regarding its principal subject, Emperor Pu Yi, as a new agent of historical forces.

It is no coincidence that this is a conceit upon which Marx would be proud. Bertolucci is an inveterate communist who makes deliberately political, though not polemical, films, much such as *The Conformist*, his 1970 work in which he decently envisions the massification of a dissident friend, and 1976's *Pompeii*, a drama spanning the first half of the twentieth century in Italy, where common peasants revolt against the fascist government. As with the work of Visconti and Pasolini, his films here the political and the personal.

Such politics presumably did no harm when persuading the Chinese authorities to allow *The Last Emperor* to be made. Joyce Herlihy worked as Associate Producer on the film, and was there to see the plan to shoot in the Forbidden City come about. "There was a film that had recently been made about the silk roads, and the director – an Italian, I think – had made friends with the Chinese. That was the beginning of being allowed to make *The Last Emperor*".

Bertolucci offered the Chinese authorities five scripts to choose for *The Last Emperor*, driving himself on *Twelfth in the Forbidden City*, the memoirs of Reginald Johnston, Pu Yi's tutor; the other an adaption of Andre Malraux's existential novel *La Condition Humaine* (Malraux died, about the failed communist revolution in 1930s Shanghai).

"I suppose when you look back on it, it won't all fit that kind," says Herlihy, "but it was a long process. It took five months, but the Chinese cooperated. On the whole it was a wonderful experience."

It is easy to see why the Chinese government favoured *The Last Emperor*. Pu Yi is virtually a non-person, a historical construct, emblematic to each regime to found itself in either its ruler or culture. Tu Qeng dynasty China, he was the Son of Heaven; "Teller of 10,000 Years". To the succession of increasingly hostile revolutionaries that seized power from 1911, he was the embodiment of a corrupt and cruel regime.

iology aside, what's vital about the Chinese authorities gained from the film Joyce Herlihy's answer is more prosaic: "Money, plenty of money." That might explain why the shoot proceeded without much interference, although Joyce admits, "There was always the feeling of being watched. One Sunday we went out near a little river and there was a man there in the most emotive diving suit. He took a picture of him, and soon after I lost my camera. I could be wrong, but I think that's why my camera went missing." But bigger problems were on the way, as Herlihy admits. "Tiananmen Square came after, and I think that's when things changed."

One especially poignant scene in the film shows the student protests of 1989, inflamed by the Republican government's corruption and German concessions in China being called to Japan by the Treaty of Nanjing. In one making-of documentary, a Chinese camereman explains proudly that the protests demonstrated the students' pathos and the dawning of "a new awareness... the ideology of a new age". In the film, the students are met by a wall of broken, their bayonets fixed. The sense of futility/despair is inescapable.

Huang has been expelled from the Forbidden City in 1934, Pu Yi becomes puppet Emperor of the Japanese state of Manchukuo in 1932, and following Japan's defeat in the Second World War, was captured by the Soviets and repatriated to China where he was re-educated under Mao's Cultural Revolution. Interviewed at the time, Bertolucci was still keen to stress that the re-education process underway by Pu Yi was "not brainwashing", that, "they never asked him to be a communist, they just asked him to understand his mistakes".

Reputations may have had a number of reasons for representing the episode in a positive light, not least his dependence on Pu Yi's arguably unreliable memoirs, and his assessment may have shifted in the light of Tiananmen. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the Chinese government would have relished to allow any criticism of the Cultural Revolution.

In fact, under Deng Xiaoping, a critical reappraisal of the Cultural Revolution had been permitted, initiated in the Beijing Spring of the late '70s, that brief period of cultural liberalisation. This is perhaps best evidenced in a scene where Pu Yi's own prime minister as arrested and tortured. The role is played by Rusheng Yan – the Chinese Deputy Minister of Culture in 1960, while the film was being shot. Penetrating was gathering force in the Soviet Union, and Deng Xiaoping was negotiating a series of moderate economic and political reforms, including the thawing of international relations. Largely as a result of the agreement on the transfer of Hong Kong, the Queen visited China the same year, but was denied access to the Forbidden City as it would have interfered with filming.

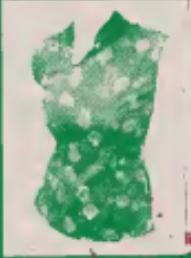
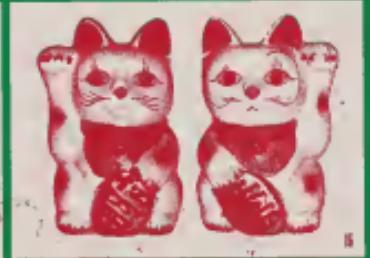
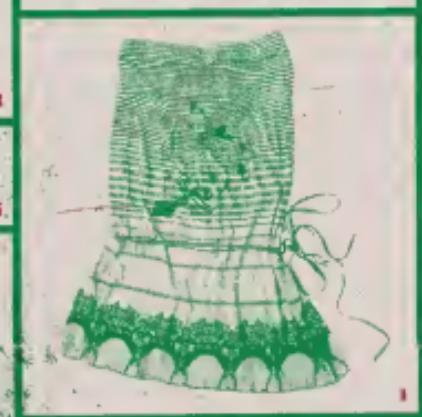
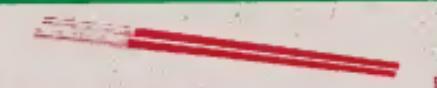
Deng Xiaoping even indicated a possible rapprochement of the Maoist Sino-Soviet Split/a diplomatic conflict between the PRC and the USSR that led to a schism in international communism, inviting the newly elected Gorbachev to visit Beijing in 1989. His visit surely inspired the Tiananmen Square protests, and the brutal suppression that followed effectively ended the brief hope of a return of peaceful democratisation.

But *The Last Emperor* remains more than a mere historical drama. It is a fine example of a film that embodies its narrative conflict in its own backstory. It is a glimpse into both China's distant past, and its recent history, testifying to a feeling moment when walls were falling, and forbidden cities across the world seemed to be opening their doors ■





CHINA IN YOUR HAND 選



The East Wind sighs

Photographer: *Louise Samuelsen*
Stylist: *Natalie Fleur*

www.bonjourbonjour.com

Model: *Lily et Petit Momo*

Makeup: *Charline Mendez* at *Naked Believe* using *Ribell*, *Breuer*

Hair: *Shane Foster* at *Mandy Godby* for *House of Absolution*

Photo Assistant: *Nick Turner*

Stylist Assistant: *Afshin Loughrey*

With thanks to *Preston & Banks*



Dress by FREDERICA WILDEMAN-BOLD LEVEL
Frida's Reward
Herring silk blouse from FREDERICA FORTUNE
Coco Pompe





Taken: 10/10/2013 BY LONG HUANG FOR L'ORÉAL
Editor: Michaela
Stylist: Michaela
Photographer: Long



HOLLYWOOD'S DEPICTION OF MARTIAL ARTS IS RARELY CLOSE TO THEIR TRUE FORM. NOW, FANCIERS DECIDED TO TRACK DOWN FOUR WISE MASTERS TO DISCOVER WHO GETS IT RIGHT, AND WHO SHOULD GET THE CHOP.

WORDS BY NEON KELLY



WUSHU

BY NEON KELLY / MARTIAL ART

mean?" Wang Yuhua, 40, uses both Chinese terms that refer to a whole range of Chinese martial arts. As a sport, Wushu may be judged through direct combat or via a non-contact demonstration of moves and routines. This ultimately allows Wushu practitioners to express themselves on a variety of levels.

"It's not an aggressive-looking art," explains Phala Simegus, one of California's most celebrated martial artists. "It's not about showy power or energy, it's about having skill over your body, showing control while performing. Of all the martial arts, I've come across a dozen or more, I think Wushu lies in the highest form of performance art."

Last year, at the age of 15, Simegus won second place in the international Kung Fu Tournament, held at the legendary Shaolin Temple in China's Henan province. But if this doesn't invoke images of Enter the Dragon-style fights to the death, then again...

"The Hollywood portrayal of the Shaolin Temple and all its disciplines is really sketchy," says Simegus. "No one has really captured the fact that it's banzai. After you win it and watch the monks performing, there's nothing foreboding about it. They come out with their head down, now, they perform their routine, and that's it. I think in the older generation of film, especially, there's this disconnect with reality, but with the last five years it's become starting to show the peaceful trend of when and when not to use Wushu — like Jet Li in Hero, for example."

While Li personifies something of an acquired taste to Westerners, Asian audiences are more familiar with the star's commitment to honoring Chinese culture. The 1988 *Bin Shouye Temple*, and its two sequels, are particularly significant in this regard, as Li made these films solely to revive interest in the Shaolin tradition, which at the time had fallen into disuse.

Simegus believes this commitment has cemented Li's reputation. "Jet Li has a longstanding background of achievement in the martial arts community, rather than just being a performer or artist. When someone like Jackie Chan, I have respect for him, but he started in Chinese sports, so his roots are a bit different. I started on the Asian Martial Arts, and I feel more valid of when he was a youth competitor. When he made the transfer to movies, he tried to bring the spirit of Chinese Martial Arts to them. That's why so many people respect him." ▶

SECRETS

MUAY THAI LITERALLY: THAI BOXING

Master Kevin Lloyd was one of the first people in the UK to learn Muay Thai, studying under Masters Toddy and Woody – the two Thai experts who brought the art to Britain in the 1950s. For over 20 years, Lloyd and his associates have taught countless students, combining ancient Thai traditions with the orthodox principles of the modern sport.

Despite clear differences in rules and practice, Board England and other UK bodies tend to regard Muay Thai and kickboxing as being the same thing. A similar lack of respect is found in the world of film, with Jean-Claude Van Damme's Kickboxer series clearly mixing Muay Thai with elements of Taekwondo and Shokunin Karate. Only in recent years has a more accurate representation emerged, thanks to Tony Jaa and Ong-Bak.

"Ong-Bak covers it all," says Lloyd. "It's got the spiritual side of things; it shows the Buddhism and the heritage there, but they also show the traditional side of things when he's putting ready for fighting in the ring; he wears long shorts rather than the usual fight shorts, and he wears wraps around his fists, rather than boxing gloves. They really bring out the traditional values of the sport."

While not quite a "pure" representation – Ong-Bak does make some use of Taekwondo – Lloyd believes the film's intention to do so has helped to introduce Muay Thai customs to people who would otherwise only see the sportier side of the art. "He does all the traditional forms of Muay Thai at the start, and these forms aren't normally taught in gym. We've had a lot of people sign up off the back of that. I think any martial arts film will get people into gyms, no any publicity is good."

With regards to older martial arts stars, Lloyd has a clear favourite: "Bruce Lee and Katherine Dryden – back in those days he was the man, which he? Because of his film presence, and his ability to do so many things different from the norm. I've read articles about when he went over to Thailand and bought a Thai kickboxer, but I've heard that he didn't go as well as he might have. Good, I can't say I'd try or not."

KRAV MAGA LITERALLY: CLOSE COMBAT

This issues combat system rose to prominence in Israel during the 1950s, taught to Jewish communities by master and policeman Eli Lichtenfeld. Today it is the chosen hand-to-hand discipline of Mossad, the feared Israeli intelligence agency, as well as being increasingly popular among Neo-martialists. Krav Maga moves are based upon natural reactions rather than theory, athletic tests, and tend to be less showy than other forms of self-defence.

"The philosophy of it says that it's not a martial art, it's a pure self-defence system," explains Nick Mason, UK director of the International Krav Maga Federation. "There's no artistic element to it – we don't perform any kata (studies) or sequences of moves like that; what we are shown, they don't care if it looks bad, as long as it's effective."

The Bourne identity immortalised Krav Maga's focus on dealing with threats quickly – check the early scene where Matt Damon disarms two gunmen and uses their bataras against them – however, according to Mason, the most accurate portrayal of the system is to be found elsewhere, with a somewhat unlikely star:

"Probably the biggest film in which it's used is Jennifer Lopez's *Enough*. It's pretty good, although there are some small differences with the style of Krav Maga we do, basically because it's been Americanised. The Americans have taken Krav Maga from the source and created a franchise system, pretty much like KFC, so in almost every major city you'll find a Krav Maga training centre. There was definitely a bit of a Hollywood touch to it, but on the whole it was accurate."

Man-hunting J-Lo vehicles aside, how does Mason find criminals approach to martial arts? "With film types, there's definitely a lot of added drama. If you've ever been out on a Saturday night in a rough area, a semi-fight lasts between 10-15 seconds maximum. Sometimes it can be one punch that ends it all."

So which films does he prefer? "A lot of it is fantastical – to get the reality of Krav Maga, so I tend to go for the *Cambodia* type-type films for entertainment value. I enjoy the martial arts element, but I like the fantasy/flying/moving firecrackers and all that sort of stuff. It's a bit of a compromise for me!"

TAEKWONDO LITERALLY: THE WAY OF THE HAND AND FOOT

With its increasing range of metal beats and acrobatic kicks, Taekwondo is a common ingredient of martial arts cinema. Despite being a distinctly Korean artifice, these moves are often used to sum up those from other disciplines – a fact that rarely acknowledged by filmmakers.

"Tony Jaa – he's more of a Taekwondo star, even though he tries to portray Thai kickboxing," claims Grandmaster Tim Loh. "The basic forms are Thai, but he jumping and jumping in the air, stuff like that, is pure Taekwondo. Is not Muay [why] you just go out to intimidate the other guy, there's less of this long-range stuff."

Grandmaster Loh knows a thing or two about spectacle: he was the first person on earth to achieve a five-point aerial break – a feat that required him to flip into the air and destroy five sets of wood before landing. But unlike the instances where kicks like this are devised for films about other martial arts, Loh believes that his discipline is represented fairly accurately on screen.

"For this, it's trying to be appreciated from an aesthetic point of view so that it looks beautiful and fast-paced. But even though people might take it slightly further, the thought behind it is still there: they fly up to the air and do four or five kicks, and that is quite achievable with Taekwondo."

What of his favorite movies? "I've always been biased here, but on the whole I do tend to find that films produced in the East work best. If they're going to portray a kick, it's going to be a nice kick, rather than just knocking people down."

And his favorite action? "One of my seniors, Tie Tao Ling, did quite a lot of Asian films. He was fantastic, and I'm not trying to call them all through *Die Hard*! I'm a Hong Kong who has very nice techniques. I must admit, whereas Jackie Chan always goes for the comedy aspect, they've all got their role in bringing martial arts to the West."

While he is presumably dedicated to Taekwondo, Grandmaster Loh believes that every discipline is worthy of equal respect: "All martial arts are like different paths going to the top of the mountain. Some paths are more flowing, so they take you round and round the mountain, others are more direct. What's important to each individual is that they should do the martial art in terms of focusing their mind and working their body." ■

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than the immediate experience
of the film in question. There
are many different aspects of the
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mention them all.*

Anticipation

Ever waited months for a box-
office behemoth? Read a book that
you loved and seriously wanted
the adaptation? Been pleasantly
surprised by an off-the-radar
independent? Anticipation plays a
central role in your reactions to a
movie, whether that means you
think a should be measured
suspension of disbelief is part of the movie's
great experience.

Moviegoer of 1

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Enjoyment

All other things aside, how did you
feel for those two hours? Were you
glad to your seat? Did the film
speak to your soul? Was it upsetting,
disappointing, or just plain boring?
Were you even awake?

Moviegoer of 1

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In Retrospect

Great movies leave you; you
carry them around wherever you
go and the things they say shape
the way you see the world. Did
this movie take away or was every
moment focused into your retained.
Was it quick but action packed, good
for a lazy Sunday afternoon? Or the
first day of the rest of your life? Did
you leave it with a heavy sigh or full
of love with a passion? Or did that
last love finally come when it was done.
Completed?

Moviegoer of 1





LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA

REVIEWED BY
ROBERT D. REED

DESCRIPTION OF
CINEMA AS
AN INSTRUMENT
FOR SOCIAL REFORM,
ROBERT REED

One of the pitfalls of hyper productivity for an astute director is that certain patterns and ticks hitherto unnoticed begin to emerge. The tantalizing themes that once lived in the oblique gaps between movies (think Malick or Kubrick) can suddenly become codified when those same gaps are reduced to nothing (think Spielberg or Soderbergh). In some cases, less is indeed more.

And so it is. It would seem, for Clint Eastwood. For with *Letters From Iwo Jima*, his third Oscar-baiting movie in as many years, and a direct follow-up to the smartly contrived *Flags of Our Fathers*, the cracks in the methodology of the 76-year-old auteur are beginning to appear.

Finally, the shot of nobles

sentimentality that was so appropriate for *Million Dollar Baby*, and much needed in *Flags*, is here starting to grate. The movie, an account of the infamous Pacific War battle for Iwo Jima told exclusively from the Japanese side, is ostensibly steeped in the merely stoic epionee used by (think Kenji Mizoguchi). Here is a men, we discover, who is a master tactician, a wise commander and a loving father. On the battlefield he will always be, as he tells his troops, out in the front.

And yet, whatever it is, the movie also veers into a state of sickly sentimentality. The soldiers, for instance, all rise to their feet, Spartacus-style, when they hear a Mom's apple pie letter being

read from the switch of a billion American soldier. Elsewhere soft-focus footstomps underscore the beauty of peace time, while the film's usefully cast and-acted and never-avoided hero, Seigo (Kousuke Niiimori), clearly has more chance of being naked in a pasture scene than killed on Iwo Jima.

Furthermore, Eastwood's famously frugal production methods are showing the strain. Most of *Letters* takes place inside caves, which is great for speedy filming and cheap lighting, but after a while it simply looks shoddy.

Then there, of course, some curiously compelling scenes, and the soldiers' group suicide, courtesy of tightly-held grenades, is indeed cruelly stark. Yet mostly this is a movie defined by an iconoclastic

director who increasingly seems to think that sentimentality is the key to high art, and even higher awards. Which is possibly true. But it would be more, just for once, if he didn't milk it with such a heavy hand. Kevin Heffernan

Anticipation. *Flags* of our fathers was great. This is going to be even better. *Reed*

Employment. mature and reliable. Some soldiers are serving. More qualified and more materials. And then we know. *Reed*

In retrospect. *Flags* was a waste of money — yet there's a ring out of my night. *Reed*

THE FOUNTAIN

REVIEWS BY
TOM CROZIER
High Achiever, Rascal

REVIEW

Director James Cameron's *The Fountain* looks set to be the year's most divisive film. At least at our office, no one seems to go by. Here, our critics share their initial impressions, while our chipper crew add a few qualifications.

So much love: The Mayans tell the story of old man. When he died his son planted a seed on his grave. The seed became a tree, the tree grew into a forest and bloomed,

and the old man's spirit flew with the barks.

Tom Croz (left) tells a different story. It's written across his body etched in the lines of his face. It's a story of pain and grief. A story he's struggled with for a thousand years.

Darren Aronofsky tells a story of love and loss that ripples over space and time. From the ancient temples of Spanish South America, to the cosmic black clouds of the far future. A story that explores, bewilders and beguiles.

What are we to make of *The Fountain*? How do you respond to a film of such relentless self-hatred that it craves for the power of spiritual salvation?

The answer, as it happens, is simple. If you're prepared to wade through this film with *The Fountain*, if you're prepared to let it under your skin, it will break your heart.

The film has the intimacy of a poem: it's elusive and it can be unforgiving, but it's carried by those pulsations of emotional energy like a divine, difficult film that practically invites ridicule, but you get the feeling, triumphantly, that

Aronofsky surrounds him with complexity. Tom is rooted in the simple, unfeeling grief of lost love as he watches his wife, Izzi (Rachel Weisz), slip through his fingers. His pain is recognisably agonising and, supported by Clint Mansell's haunting score, it will leave you gasping for breath.

The film has the intimacy of a poem: it's elusive and it can be unforgiving, but it's carried by those pulsations of emotional energy like a divine, difficult film that practically invites ridicule, but you get the feeling, triumphantly, that

Aronofsky doesn't care.

He's remaking the parameters of science fiction. He's made a film that isn't about genre or precedent. It's about vision, belief and emotion. If anything it echoes Kurosawa's 2001 but *The Fountain* is as spacious and odyssey-like. Like Kubrick, Aronofsky has created a new cinematic vocabulary and he's moved beyond the expectations of his first film. He's putting this out there to change the shape of the landscape for good. Maybe it'll die on its feet, but then death is the root to life. *Matt Nathan*

Anticipation: The most highly anticipated film of this summer's life. **One**

Enjoyment: An essential powerhouse that makes you sit and enjoy again. *Lester* by layers. An unparalleled experience. **Five**

In Retrospect: A cinematic missed mark, the best film of *Ramsey*'s career. **Five**

So much hate: You don't get more over-reaching, visually pompous sci-fi weepies for your money these days. If justice is to be served, *The Fountain* — the splashiest new blockbuster — should stamp out the genre, and the director's career, for good.

The story (the word is used lightly) has been mechanically rekindled from a graphic novel penned by Aronofsky, from which original cast members Cole Blakely and Brad Pitt had the good foresight to run a mile. The director eventually secured the talents of arch villains Rachel Weisz and Hugh Jackman for the lead roles of Izzi and Toming respectively.

As each character (the word is used lightly) falls and rises/falls higher way through a thousand years of history, Jackman decides to take on the cognitive Everest of finding the cure for death by putting pieces of bark on a monkey's brain and smashing up offices, while the terminally ill Weisz decides to write white bubble text and write a novel about Mayan history which has the artificially-aged look of something you'd find on the shelves of *Pestilence*.

Indeed, artifice looms in every scene both visually and ideologically with much of the content (the word is used lightly) obviously gleaned from the Wikipedia entry for 'Mayan death rituals'. More Tony Scott than Stanley Kubrick, the film peddles a visually isolated age reminiscent of a *Wet Dream* cover, with overcooked, over-composed backdrops shotened in to paste over the numerous logo credits.

In *Regret* (right) Aronofsky used visual and aural repetition to analyse us in the best traits of an artist. As a testament to the director's lack

of substance he uses the same device again here, but this time to mislead you into thinking his徒徒 ideas have gravitas and credibility. By the third time you've seen Izzi talk Toming out for a walk in the sun, the brain begins to show the film's true form; it loses all meaning, the notion of a massive spending emoji becoming your only basis for reason.

The last 25 minutes of the movie contain barely anything but already-seen footage with one of the only new scenes including an unintentionally hilarious piece of auto-excitement in which Jackman slathers himself in the messes while laid contained within the Tree of Life while writing around on the floor.

As this crude heartless endeavour chases its own tail, the director, manically searching for closure, overcomplicates matters further by throwing down such nuggets of redundant fortune cookie lipgloss speak as, 'Death is the road to sex?' In this case, why bother searching for the Tree of Life?

At 165 minutes, *The Fountain* is still 45 minutes too long; its relative brevity doing nothing to prevent you from feeling like you've been watching a lumbering, ill-judged waste project which has all the depth, insight and humour of a multi-million dollar science-fiction with delusions of grandeur. *David Jenkins*

Anticipation: The half-decent film in the one-and-a-half package? **Four**

Enjoyment: An entertainment for all. **One**

In Retrospect: We'll never work an Hollywood again. *Tony*, *Me* and *Depress* complete broken. **One**





Get Shorty

Directed by

Elton John
Sam Rockwell
Steve Buscemi
Rosie O'Donnell
Robert Downey Jr.

Part 1: The Early Years:

Dito (loosely based on writer/director Elton John) is a slyly but confused teenager growing up in Queens, New York, in 1968. And if the past 30 years of movies have taught us anything, it's that life on the streets in NYC is tough.

But A Guide to Recognizing Your Senses is based on Montel's actual autobiography, so we've more reason than usual to believe that what we see of young Dito (Silas Leikhauf) and his friends — Antonio, Scott, Mike and girlfriend Leanne — is more authentic than most.

So even if Silas sounds like another *Be-co-the-streets* drama, at its core is a deceptively thoughtful look at how different people — family, friends and enemies — shaped one man's life.

In adolescence

Most consequential of all is Dito's relationship with his father (a domestic Godfather-type played by Chazz Palminteri), which is fraught with tension and misunderstanding despite the fact that they clearly love each other, and which ultimately leads to bitterness and alienation.

This relationship, though subordinate to the story of Dito and his friends, is the most compelling part of Montel's debut. The extent to which it will affect young Dito in his later life becomes apparent in the second half of the film in which...

Part 2: The Later Years: ...we look back. To where he's from. To the melting pot of people, relationships and incidents which

have caused him to become what he is today: a lost child with a deeply ingrained love for his streets, his family, his past and his aunts.

Montel's wonder stroke is to let reality, humility and credibility to the portion of the film by casting his older self as Robert Downey Jr. We feel his pain at former events; how time changes everything and ultimately how time changes nothing.

He stalks his former stamping ground, meets his former friends, renews his with his mother and tries to have the rift with his father. Some things change, others don't — Leanne (Rosario Dawson) now has a daughter. She's the same Queens girl, and Dito is the same Queens guy, but this is a different time. When Dito left, he could have married Leanne. Now their

friction is substantiated.

Such carefully scripted and laughingly directed work is a rare joy — especially in a debut. Montel's skill lies in crafting a tangible reality. Whether it's actually his reality we can only guess, but we'd like to think it is. And we'd all like to experience the saintly guidance of friends like Antonio Lealde and Mike Johnson Wilson & Adrián Ortega.

Anticipation
autobiographical, debut, ensemble, self-indulgent, youthful... and... *The*

King (youthful, energetic, bright, irreverent,... *Three*)
In Retrospect... *Between*
exactly recognizable... *Re*

9TH COMPANY

REVIEW

DIRECTOR:
Peter Berg
STARRING:
Mark Wahlberg,
Anthony Mackie,
Kingsley Ben-Adir,
Liam Neeson

Thank you, Hollywood,
for sparing what could have been a
seminal war film.

Although ostensibly a
generic portmanteau of a forgotten
regiment in the Afghan/Russo conflict, whose journey takes them from dehumanising training
to a bloody dismemberment on an
Afghan mountain, 9th Company
borrows a trek load of clichés
from benchmark blockbusters like
Platoon and Full Metal Jacket,
rather than fulfilling its own
unique potential.

They're all here: the young
soldier with a sweetheart waiting
for him at home, the sensitive arty
type turned killing machine, the chopper
choppers flying through smoke,



and various down-on-their-knees,
'Why-oh-why?' moments.

Yet the battle sequences are
impressive, and the beauty of
the Afghan mountains is readily
acknowledged. In fact it's the
visual splendour that redeems
the film – a powerful and at times
poetic landscape, which captures
the desperation and isolation of
the young soldiers as they find

all two-and-a-half days of heavy
artillery attacks by hundreds
of insurgents and Pakistani
mercenaries.

But as with most aspects of
9th Company, that has been done
before, and done better. The film's
biggest battle is to stand on its
own two feet amid the crowded
war movie genre, and just be
relevant. *Next time*

Anticipation. Peter Berg's 9th Company's war blockbuster. *Next*

Enjoyment. This is Bergman's take on Hollywood's Eisenstein past rolled in his green *Tar*.

In Retrospect. Should have been so much more. *This*

An interview with Dito Montiel, writer and director of *A Guide to Recognising Your Saints*.

LW: Dito, *Saints* is your first film and it's a major feature – what made you think you could pull it off?

Montiel: I'm funny. I remember meeting out of town, and after watching *3:10 to Yuma* that I'd never seen since this movie up, but I had so many great people working with me that I wasn't too worried.

LW: Where did the title come from?

Montiel: I had this book when I was a kid called *The Fortune Book of Saints*. I never liked things as it, and I had a picture of my friend ANTONIO ALVAREZ – another friend said, "If you develop this, it could maybe be a book."

LW: Chazz Palminteri is pivotal in the film, how did he come on board?

Montiel: John, one day Chazz called me up and I thought he was wrong, just wrong, but I'm more glad that I was wrong about thinking he was wrong. Every time I hear about a fresh voice director and he gets all these people around him always looking for the punch line, like, who's last

LW: Less. What about Robert Downey Jr? How much was he involved in the production?

Montiel: Robert's strange. He leaves me cryptic messages like, "I just saw *Shawshank*, try and do a homenote, and be ready to blow a billion dollars." I kind of enjoy him. He's really weird...

LW: You break the fourth wall half way through the film in a way that's completely unexpected. How did you think of that scene?

Montiel: One day chewing [stache], who plays Antonio was on set and he says, "What does Antonio think of himself?" I was like that he's the biggest motherfucker to ever walk the street?" I said, "No, he thinks he's a piece of shit." Tell you what, with those kill and tell the others what you think of yourself." I got each of the other guys to do the same thing. I just thought, "Fuck it, we'll put it in the movie just when the audience thinks that they know who these people are!"

LW: How close to your real-life friends is this story?

Montiel: The real story is a lot more intense and violent than the movie shows. In real life Antonio actually escaped from prison, and he did a lot more things than him [sic] says. Jonathan Rhys-Meyers & Adrian O'Connor

Check out the transcript in full to full, creative glory at www.thewhitehaven.co.uk.

FACTORY GIRL

DIRECTED BY
MERYL STREEP
SCREENPLAY
BY DAVID KROHN
FROM THE Novel
BY DONNA KARAN
AND JENNIFER KARAN



Hype, gossip and
newsgloss celebrity made Andy
Warhol tick, and so they remain
inescapable when looking at the
man and his muses, Edie Sedgwick.

In fact, creating Dennis Miller
in the role of the impresario who
became an overnight superstar
makes the film so self-referential
that Warhol himself would be
proud. And though Miller is
constantly engaging, it's because
this is a great performance, or
because she's so saturated in
our own celebrity culture that she
can't be separated from the real
Sedgwick?

The problem with *Factory Girl*
is that Warhol's moment is gone,
and so too is the focus his work
created. We've moved beyond his
concept of *celebrity*, and we're
numb to the excesses of fame. As a
result, it's difficult not to experience
sympathy towards two people who, by
their own confession, made no ovies
about "nothing much".

As it happens, the interviews,
clips and photos that play out
over the end credits will get you
closer to Sedgwick than any
portrayal of a lost girl with a
depleting trust fund. And come

Anticipation: The shock
gave *There's Something About
Marilyn* far at least six
months. **Fear:**

Enjoyment: Miller has
the charisma to pull it
off, but it feels wasted
on this modern morality
tale. **Time:**

In Retrospect: There's
no real need for *Factory
Girl*, just go pick up that
copy of *Marilyn*. **Two**



DREAMGIRLS

DIRECTED BY BRIAN WILSON
SCREENPLAY
BY DAVID KROHN
COSTUME DESIGN
BY CLAUDIO SIMONE

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL
ROBBINS

Dreamgirls is a pop-culture-tapped movie about a group
respectably at the bottom of Beyoncé's *Candy*. So we know
we'd had one and ask her
what she thought.

Q: Okay, give me, say, five DVDs
that are in your collection that show
what kind of movies you like.
A: *Love Actually*, *Notting Hill*,
Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants,
My Big Fat Greek Wedding.

Q: Has Beyoncé come along at
the right time? Do you think that
girls will embrace it, and it'll fill that
Sex and the City void?

A: I don't think so. Maybe it's just
me, because I've never wanted to
be a pop star, and maybe those
girls who do will like it more. But
I didn't watch it and think, I want
that life!

Q: Why not?
A: The hand had this girl power,
but as soon as they hit the bed
levels they just turned their back on
that friend. That's not the *Sex and
the City* vibe. In *Sex and the City*,
they're behind each other the whole
way. They went through all these
changes together, and they were
still friends at the end. *Dreamgirls*
didn't really show that.

Q: Was it obvious that the film was
based on a Broadway show?
A: Yeah. I didn't know it was a

musical, but I was thinking that
I'd love to see it on the stage. I
had that sense of admiration
at the end, because it was like a
performance rather than a film.
Q: What did you make of
Beyoncé?

A:

I thought she was beautiful.
Q: What about the relationship
between Eibile [Jennifer Hudson]
and Diana [Beyoncé]?

A:

I went into the film thinking that

Beyoncé was going to be the main
star and I was surprised that
Jennifer Hudson took on the lead

role almost.

Q: Do you think there's an irony
there, in that Diana isn't really
the star of the band, just like Beyoncé
isn't really the star of the film, but
she's pushed to the front anyway?
Do you think that dynamic makes
the film a bit subversive almost?

A: It's not something I really

thought about. I guess so. I can
see what you mean once you start
thinking about it, but I don't think
that's something that people will
care about. But it's interesting
that someone might be prepared to
jeopardize the whole meaning of
the film to push Beyoncé into the
limelight and I don't think it would
be the same film if they did that.
It'd be a bit lost.

Q: What do you make of the fact
that Beyoncé lost weight to do

the role?

A: I think if it was any other role
that wouldn't have been right
because I love *Figure* and I love
that she's got curves. But Diana
Ross is very willowy, and she was
just trying to emulate her. So I think
it's relevant to this film. They didn't
say, You can't be a movie star
unless you lose weight!

Q: What did you take away from
the film?

A: When I think about it now I
think about the dresses and the
make-up and the hair – that's really
60s feel. I really enjoyed that side
of it because I love that era
anyway. The dresses that they
wore were just beautiful, full
elbow-length and sparkly, but really
vivacious as well.

Q: What's holding it back from
being a classic girls' film?
A: I think a lot of classic girls'
films involve the male lead being
somebody that everybody fancies
and a lot of love stories. But
the love story wasn't ready at the
forefront. Jennifer Foxx wasn't
the type of girl that a lot of women
are going to fall for. It didn't have
that. I didn't have John...
Q: George?

A: 3, 4, 5. I really enjoyed
it while I was watching it, but I
didn't quite fall for what I went in
expecting it to be.



An interview with Bobcat Goldthwait, director of *Sleeping Dogs*.

LWLM: How unhappy events influenced this film?

Goldthwait: A lot of it is autobiographical — my ex-kids her dog.

LWLM: How many times have you used that line?

Goldthwait: Not it's the first time. I've been working to say that. I usually tell people that my dog's really hot.

LWLM: Isn't your dog called Stephen Baldwin?

Goldthwait: No, I mostly called him Stephen Baldwin, but I called him William Holden instead. I'm glad I didn't, although my dog is a lower-class Christian so it would have made sense — Stephen Baldwin just found Jesus apparently he was in Long Island.

LWLM: Jesus?

Goldthwait: Jesus and Stephen Baldwin. That's where they hooked up. Actually, the adobe hut we sit the same time; it comes from her dog, and to make a film about heresy.

LWLM: Big day.

Goldthwait: It was a very big day. I think the kind of influence would be Neil Gaiman or something like Chuck and Fred. That's the kind of stuff that influences my the comedy that comes from being uncomfortable. In *Reservoir*, if you want to go and see a comedy you're stuck with broad character comedies — which I'm not going to minimize — considering that's how I made my living in the '80s — or you end up going to an indie comedy and those always wrap up with, "This is fucked, man, why bother?" So I thought it was more subversive to make a comedy based on what's not an upbeat ending.

LWLM: What's your take on honesty, because it seems that you're kind of against it.

Goldthwait: I think a lot of damage is done under the guise of honesty. I have something written, I tell you, now I feel better and you're burdened with all that weird shit.

LWLM: You shot the film in 16 days. How much directing can you do in that time?

Goldthwait: Well, I'm not really a fan of storyboards even because they take us out of the script so I was more concerned with getting the performances down and getting the script shot than I was with creating a page of "set". The only thing you can take credit for is having the right people.

LWLM: It's your third film, the first being *Shake the Crown*, which Martin Scorsese has hated...

Goldthwait: "The classic case of drunk clean帆帆!"

Scorsese was interviewing him about film preservation and they asked him, "Do you want to preserve every film, even *Shake the Crown*?" to which he replied, "I love *Shake the Crown*!" I think that interview took 20 hours. My daughter asked me why I kept reading it over and over and I said, "Look, your dad's never going to win an award. This? That is an award!" Adam LeFevre

Please visit our website for more information, www.thefilmcritics.com. HOW

SLEEPING DOGS

DIRECTED BY
BOB GOLDTHWAIT
STARRING
Melinda Page Hamilton
Bryce Johnson
Adam LeFevre

REVIEWED BY
JONATHAN LEE

They call it a 'date movie', but if you're trying to impress a prospective partner by subjecting them to 90 minutes of some tedious non-comic star's wretchedly profane, then you might want to have a good, hard look at your basic social skills. Maybe you're just not ready for that serious commitment yet.

Sleeping Dogs, for its part, seems fully apprised of this state of affairs and at least does its best to find new life in this shallow genre pool.

Wholesome primary school teacher Amy (Melinda Page Hamilton) has put a pooh-pooh-friendly past behind her (there's no polite way of putting it: she sacked off a dog) and is now getting serious with her study beau (Bryce Johnson).

But, shaped by the American fixation with self-regarding catharsis, she regards this secret as her other half. The film goes on to explore whether their, or any, relationship can withstand the rigours of such full and personal disclosure.

Goldthwait (that crazy dude from *Police Academy*) is as restrained a writer and director as he was a movie performer, guiding his film with charming sensitivity while covering adult performances from a relatively unknown cast. Without any hint of high-mindedness, he is also refreshingly open about which side of the hetero/lesbo fence he comes down on.

Despite being thin on laughs and light on conventional tension, *Sleeping Dogs* manages to be both warm and witty. It's only a matter of time before it gets tagged as the date movie for people who, quite sensibly, don't like date movies. *Adam LeFevre*

ANTICIPATION: The dog splashing Blair Tice

ENJOYMENT: six stars
don't keep them

In Retrospect: If you still prefer *Shake the Crown*, perhaps it just wasn't meant to be. These



SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL

UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL

With Starsky &

With *Starsky & Hutch* behind him, director Todd Phillips has taken the lazy, if logical, route. In his new film *School for Scoundrels*, he's made a film that is in no way different from anything he's done before, only this time he's put in less effort and cut more corners.

Losely based on the 1980 Terry Thomas film of the same name, this time around Billy Bob Thornton is Dr P, teacher of a covert class for losers who want to learn to be cool. Number one loser

is Jon Heder, a meter maid who drives around town in an electric golf buggy, listening to rock and getting abused. He's also a *Big Brother* type disengaged kid, but even they think he's a nerd, and they're dead on the money.

It's up to Thornton to teach Heder and his lovable band of dweebs to man-up and get laid, but Heder's initial success with the beautiful Amanda (Jasmin Banzer) makes Thornton jealous, and they both end up competing for the same girl. Heavenly! Who will win?

The chief problem with *School for Scoundrels* is that somebody needed to ask it some hard questions, and clearly didn't. Simple things like, "Why has this happened?" Why does he do that?" And most of all, "What's going on?" The result is a film that doesn't really know what it wants to be and even if it did, it still wouldn't be very good.

Heder's reenactment as a losers' men isn't convincing, but more unsettling is his eventual treatment

of Thornton, his uncharismatic spitefulness obliterates the last vestiges of sympathy for the character and the film itself. Jennifer Wilkins

Anticipation: everybody knew a scoundrel. There

Enjoyment: this makes no sense at all. Tim

In Retrospect: nobody knew a scoundrel any more. See



THE GOOD GERMAN

REVIEW

MOVIE OF THE WEEK
Starring George Clooney, Cate Blanchett, Ralph Fiennes

When asked to name his movie highlights of 2008, The New Yorker (green) Anthony Lane pointed to a private screening he'd hosted of the 1940 classic *All About Eve*. Towards the end, a friend asked, "What happened?" Well," he replied, explaining the plot. "We," his friend insisted. "I mean, what happened to me?"

They don't make 'em like they used to, right Anthony? Only, they do. In fact, if you're Steven Soderbergh you make 'em exactly like they used to, right down to the vintage lenses and the swipe-cut editing.

So *The Good German* is a relentlessly old-fashioned noir thriller set in post-war Berlin. Is it generic? Well, kind of, but with one important qualification – it's really pretty good.

George Clooney is Jake Geissmer, a world-wary war

correspondent re-assigned to Berlin to cover the Potsdam Peace Conference of 1945. Here, Russia, Britain and the US carved up the spoils of one war while firing the first shots of another.

But when the authorities turn a blind eye after the body of Corporal Tally (Coby Maguire), a black marketeer who also happens to be involved with Jake's ex-equeuse – the dangerously beautiful Lene Brandt (Cate Blanchett) – turns up in the Russian sector, Geissmer uncovers another story altogether: the dirty secrets behind America's plans to win this new, cold war.

The Good German is a technical marvel, visually and thematically resonant of the likes of Casablanca and The Third Man. All the usual noir clichés are present and correct: the tough-talking cynic (says Tally to a colleague, "Everyone I know has a hard

luck story"), the seen-it-all-before barmen ("That's Berlin"); and, most of all, the moral uncertainties.

The title itself is a multi-layered reference to the hypocrisy of the occupation: Berlin is a city of good bad guys and bad good guys; the question is not so much who among the Germans deserves to be punished, as who among the visitors deserves to choke.

Clooney and Maguire both play against type: Jake Geissmer's cocksure confidence is gradually beaten out of him as he follows Lene further and further from the moral high ground. And as the lord of gay whorl tell you how he loves his girl, but let you fuck her for the right price, Maguire couldn't be further away from the grand responsibility of Spideyman.

But it's Blanchett who really impresses. Not just an actress in a '40s costume, she's an appre-
hensive

hensive earlier era, with a face to rival Bergman and Bacall. Soderbergh doesn't thin her; he gapes in awe.

The old-fashioned ethos does mean some clumsy plotting, and Jake is too often the victim rather than the agent of events, but these don't detract from the fact that *The Good German* is a fine vintage Mattress.

Anticipation... suspense... action... is that necessary? Three.

Enjoyment... sex... a smacking, slightly coddled charm, and a dashback in green against black-and-white. Four.

In Retrospect... The snappy, ill-suited line conundrum in the same breath as the characters are quick to close. Three.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

STORY BY
Robert De Niro
DIRECTED BY
Martin Scorsese
SCREENPLAY BY
John Curran, Anthony
Fazio, Alan Ballou

REVIEWED BY
Peter Travers

In the opening

sequence of *The Good Shepherd*, Co-director Edward Wilson (Matt Damon) rehearses his daily routine. He dresses, catches the bus to work and pushes open the door to his office. As it swings closed behind him, the words 'NOT AN EXIT' are plainly visible in the centre of the frame.

There can be no more succinct summary of the dilemma at the heart of Robert De Niro's second directorial outing: once you're part of the Central Intelligence Agency, there's no getting out.

The bungled Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 provides the background to this otherwise banal account of how the u-

nited's most powerful covert intelligence service came into existence. As word gets out that classified information was leaked to the Soviets, De Niro cuts between Wilson's formative years at Yale and his early induction into the Office of Strategic Services in a bid to shed light on the factors which motivate his later-day hunt for the man in the Agency's midlife.

Such heavyweight subject matter might begin to pall after nearly three hours were it not for the quality of the film's performances. Despite opening on screen about as convincing as Peter Pan, Damon brings impressive psychological and

emotional depth to the role of a man who must forever choose between his job and his private life. Starring opposite him,

Angeline Jolie offers a complex and compassionate portrayal of a political wife shocked to her husband's profession.

Throughout the production De Niro pays meticulous attention to period details, whilst carefully teasing out the contemporary parallels in Eric Roth's intelligent script. In a cameo role as General Bill Sullivan, he warns the young Wilson that, "It's always in someone's interests to provide fact, real or imagined". The brutal abuse of a suspected Russian double agent is likewise a stark

reminder of how little things have changed in the last 50 years.

ANTICIPATION. De Niro looks at the hole and a stack of papers in every department. Let the good times roll. Four

ENJOYMENT. An immensely political drama and exhilarating spy thriller rolled into one. Three

IN RETROSPECT. A tightly plotted yet couldn't-care-less amalgamation between the narrative threads. Four





INLAND EMPIRE

WRITTEN BY
David Lynch
DIRECTED BY
David Lynch
STARRING
Laura Elena Harring
Andrea Riseborough
Laura Dern

ON DVD
HOME BOX

Let's face facts:

David Lynch's films are an acquired taste. For those on the outside, it's hard to see the appeal of his gleefully obscure offerings. Such people are unlikely to be won over by the director's latest – a three-hour anthology of bizarre surrealism, combining all of his familiar obsessions.

There is no single narrative at the heart of *Inland Empire*, instead there are five or six plot threads, tangled up to form a kind of poisonous cinematic candy floss. The closest of these strands concerns Hollywood actress Nada Gance (Laura Dern), who leads the starring role in *On High-In Blue*. *Tarantula* – a Siskel's bad梦ine in which she enjoys a titillating

relationship with co-star Devon Bent (Justin Theroux). Before long, their on-screen romance turns into reality, where matters are further complicated by the fact that Blue Tarantula is in fact a remake of a classic Polish film, which in turn is based upon an ancient folktale. Interspersed with these tales is the plight of a miserable prostitute, and an eerie vision starring anthropomorphic rabbits.

If it sounds bewildering on paper, on screen it's positively terrifying. Viewers who struggled with *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* should approach this film with care. This time around there is no gentle kick-up-the-murdness; from the very start we are plunged into the dark – both literally and

metaphorically – with very little in the way of light relief.

The first hour contains a few moments of humour, but after this point the gong gets increasingly tough. Lynch's deflection to digital filming adds a further harsh edge to the already sombre scenes of loneliness and sadness, while nasty surprises seem to lurk around every corner. Among other things, *Inland Empire* is a powerful reminder that you don't have to understand something to be afraid of it.

Lynch's latest will not appeal to everyone. There's a good chance that even hardcore fans will be put off by the relentless grittiness, yet on every level this feels like a logical extension of his previous films. From the perverse use of pop

music to the splintered portrayal of women, everything here serves of the director's personal aesthetic. For those who can stomach three hours of insanity this is a rare pleasure, a genuinely disturbing experience. Henn Kelly

Anticipation: Household names suggest a difficult three hours, but Lynch can never do ill. Fear

Rejoice: Is it actually enjoyable? You'll be too scared to be sure. Fear

In Retrospect: Occupying a uniquely disconcerting, yet strangely uplifting, nothing zone like it exists. Fear

SHUT UP & SING

DIRECTED BY
LINDA LAWRENCE
STARRING
THE DIXIE CHICKS
AND
MAREN MØLLER
RATED R/18

The Dixie Chicks are a three-piece country group – a phenomenon in their native US. Juggling diamond discs (two and counting), babies and international stadium tours, they epitomise the modern American woman, and challenge the stereotypes of their redneck roots.

But in 2003 they committed the ultimate example of showbiz perfidy – the Chicks' lead singer Natalie Maines, proclaimed (unwittingly) to the world via a London audience: "Just so you know we're ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas".

This throwaway comment during the burgeoning Iraq conflict proved more costly than the three could imagine, words as catalysts that the fabric of the band were called into question.

Though simple in remit, *Shut Up & Sing* is a well-executed documentary that charts the Chicks' fall from grace – from a Texan DJ's Dixie Chick ban and

public OD crashing to their return to the American media circus.

But however much it captures the essence of the Chicks' beliefs, at its core is one major issue which the film never directly addresses: We live in a world obsessed by celebrity, where every ghostwritten biography is an instant best-seller, and every interview is a breathless exclusive. This is a world of stage-managed access and pre-planned controversy, but occasionally a simple truth slips through the safety net of public relations. It's these adibis and public comments that expose the self-power of celebrity, but it's that power that the film fails to explore.

Unplanned and uncoaxed, for the Dixie Chicks, Maines' comment had an impact much more telling than any lyrical attack tucked away in the middle of an LP. Yes, they're musicians, not politicians, but they speak to millions of people in a language they understand,

and, what's more, no-one can do anything about it. Nor can you dismiss them lightly. Much like the Nixon Administration he had out at John Lennon, George W Bush is initially flustered by the band's comments, recognising, no doubt, the extent of the influence the Chicks have in their home country – if not on policy then at least on hearts and minds.

Their unyielding spirit, determination and continued success are testament to the kind of girl power Posh and co. only dreamt of. Directors Barbara Kopple and Catherine Peck might have delved deeper into the political

implications of Maines' comments and the power of popular culture, but *Shut Up & Sing* is a fine example of the truth behind the First Amendment – you can say what you want, but be prepared for the consequences. *Ashley O'Brien*

Rating: 4/5
Music: Two

Enjoyment: None still
From the Screen
Cast: Three

In Retrospect:
Powerful voices
in voices: 4/5
Music: Three

ORCHESTRA SEATS

DIRECTED BY
CATHERINE PECK
STARRING
CATHERINE PECK,
JACQUES, FRÉDÉRIC,
CATHERINE THOMPSON,
CATHERINE THOMPSON

Danièle Thompson's *Orchestra Seats* is the charming if slightly naïf story of Jacques, a modern-day Mary Poppins who blows into Paris on a cloud of baby dust to convince his phonetically depressed inhabitants that, really, life isn't that bad even if you are rich and famous.

These inhabitants include soap star Catherine piano virtuoso Jean-François, money bags Jacques and his son Frédéric. All of these high-fiving hard-living cases will have their lives – and in some cases other bits – touched by Jesus co., whose homespun wisdom is just the cure for these disaffected urban dandies.

Though it references some cultural heavyweights, at best *Orchestra Seats* is an Aardvark done without the visual fire, at worst, it indulges in shameless emotion-laden puffing. Furthermore, Paris itself is shot with surprisingly little character.

Even so, it's sweet that it has the need to please. *Emily Bangs*

Anticipation: Paris is
Springtime: Three

Enjoyment: Amusingly look
Alike/Likeable: Three

In Retrospect: Charming
Buff: Two



WRITTEN BY
Nuri Bilge Ceylan
PRODUCED
Nuri Ceylan, Met
SARAY FILM

REVIEWED
BY
JESSIE MIR

"In the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city, he has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures." This is how the Swedish hagioclyst desecrated Tahar Ben Jelloun when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature at the end of last year, but it applies equally to his compatriot, Nuri Bilge Ceylan.

In his last film, *Uzak*, the director painted a stunning portrait of loneliness and male friendship. Now, in *Climates*, he turns his photographer's sensibility to the ground between men and women, to disconcerting effect.

A university professor, Işın, played by Ceylan himself, decides to split from his younger girlfriend Bahar (Ceylan's real-life wife Ebru), while on holiday. Adrift on his return to Istanbul, he has a violent sexual encounter with an ax before deciding to go to Turkey's snowbound eastern region, where Bahar is working in order to win her back.

Though Ceylan draws heavily on Pemük's *Snow*, in which an emigre poet travels to northwestern Turkey to woo an old flame in a town smothered by a blizzard, the

snow in *Climates* seems literally colder and more isolating. While Ünal was contemplative, Ceylan is unsettling and pessimistic, wrong-footing the viewer with deceptive shots and edits.

Both Nobel-winning author and Cannes-garlanded filmmaker agree that snow is miraculously beautiful. Ceylan is as unerring in the manner he captures its texture and wonder as he is on the psychology of our adult relationships. And where to say that while Pemük, a prominent critic of the Armenian genocide, is more outspoken in his politics, in his own way, Ceylan is not making us beg a poet. *Jessie Mir*

Anticipation: The western director's previous films, *Uzak*, seemed austere but gripping. Fear

Enjoyment: The medium-long shot here, like Ceylan's earlier films, is a rare respite from looks beautiful... Fear

In Retrospect: We can only know themselves if they don't know the others. Fear



An interview with Nuri Bilge Ceylan, writer-director-star of *Climates*.

LW: In your latest film there is a shift in the focus of relationships, though it still feels as if you're exploring similar themes as *Uzak*.

Ceylan: There was between the men, thus as between a man and a woman. I have many experiences of both types of relationships, so I had very painful memories from when I was younger. If you have painful memories you want to make a film out of that, generally, if you are a filmmaker.

LW: It almost felt like a *green film*, a thriller.

Ceylan: Mostly when I do a film I never start from a theory. I may change this film at every step, during the shooting, during the making. The most difficult thing for me is to be more about something during the shooting – when I shoot something I shoot just the opposite as well. To the scenes as crying I also shoot laughing; only in the editing does I understand which one fits better for a certain place. I just try to be realistic, so the end I have only one guide, it's my soul, nothing else.

LW: Have you ever thought about fixing something written by somebody else?

Ceylan: I would like to make adaptations, but it's not easy, sometimes translating yourself as a human... You know adapting something will be easier – I have many novels or stories that I like – but mistakes when you begin to work on it, it turns out to be more difficult. I couldn't make an adaptation yet but I want to do it some day.

LW: You started out as a photographer; do you continue to take photographs?

Ceylan: I like working in photography these days, art's machines were gone. In the past and now almost everything you just work like you are a child. Nobody is expecting anything from you so I feel very happy working in my photography. I try to make my film look like photography as much as possible – an icon of production style, not the result. I don't like too many people around during the shoot you must keep yourself solitary as much as possible. The shoot better, it's more clean, more pure. On that film, I worked with 12, 14 people because of new [3D] technology, and I was writing – at the last end, I think I will make a smaller again. *Jessie Mir*



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CATCH A FIRE

PG-13 / 140 mins.

DIRECTED BY
TOM ROBBINS
STARRING
THOMAS HENKEL,
ROBIN LAWRENCE,
JONATHAN RICHARDSON

The true story of

Patrick Chomusso is the stuff of script-writing dreams. Arrested by anti-terrorist officer Nic Vos (Tim Robbins), Patrick (Derek Luke) is radicalised by the torture and cruelty he experiences in prison. On his release, he leaves his wife and child to travel to Mozambique, to the camp of Spear of the Nation, the military wing of the ANC. From here he underakes a bombing mission against the oil refinery where he used to work that would become one of the most symbolic and strategic defeats suffered by the white government.

Catch A Fire couldn't have come at a better time in its evocation of the slippery dynamics

of terrorism; it has a lot to say about the current chaos in the world. It's a shame, then, that Philip Noyce has made a cat-and-mouse movie that's almost completely inert.

It's not helped by Shannen Doherty's lifeless daughter of Joe Slovo, who trained Chomusso in Mozambique. Her script, written in the spirit of reconciliation that admirably characterises South Africa's attitude to its past, is so half-baked on treating both sides fairly that it sabotages much of the story's dramatic potential, while contributing to a series of howling clichés.

Nic, you see, is basically a good guy – he doesn't like torturing people, it's just that there's a

communist threat out there, and if there's one thing Nic hates more than Nazis, it's these lousy communists. And yet, he is the bad guy, so Tim Robbins substitutes fiery conviction for a guilty self-regard, a decision that does him no favours at all.

Remarkably, Chomusso is almost more unsympathetic, only landing in jail in the first place because he wouldn't budge that he was having an affair with his wife. His defence, his wife is revealed to be a treacherous bitch of epic proportions)

Which is a shame, because Noyce nabs the photography of the South African wild; a great gulp of expansive filmmaking that

contrasts quite smartly with the tight close-ups of prison and police officers. But really *Catch A Fire* fails to do exactly that, which, about all, is the real crime. Matt Reesman

Anticipation – a nicely made action thriller with lots to say about the politics of terror. Three

Enjoyment – Should you feel guilty for not enjoying it more? Two

In Retrospect – The many poor decisions, and lack of the mechanics needed to tell the story. One

FREEDOM WRITERS

DIR: GEORGE R. ROBERTS
WRITERS: GEORGE R. ROBERTS,
JONATHAN LEE BROWN
PROD: JEFFREY L. COHEN
DISTR: 20TH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION

"As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." Face it, from the moment Erin Gruwell (Hillary Swank) walks into the classroom, you're already envisioning Michelle Pfeiffer in a short skirt.

Freedom Writers starts off on very familiar ground – idealistic teacher brings undivided enthusiasm to a group of aggressive teens – but for a film built around meeting challenges, the audience gets the harshest test of all: witnessing the Hollywood cheese.

But despite the high cliche count, the strongest and most



unexpected test comes at the end of the film – emerging dry-eyed. You know you want to hate it but you can't. It's well made, the soundeffect is powerful but not overwhelming, and the acting is strong throughout from Swank and Sarsour to the inexperienced

pupillaries. So yes, you'll laugh and cry, but you'll deny it the second you step back into daylight. **Entertainment**

Anticipation: If anyone can save it, it's Swank – but she's got her work

cut out... **Tina**

Enjoyment: Your 13. In entertainment, cool, happy then exhausted. **Three**

In Retrospect: The old faves work just fine. These

NOTES ON A SCANDAL

DIR: CLAUDIO MONTALBETTI
WRITERS: CLAUDIO MONTALBETTI
PROD: CLAUDIO MONTALBETTI
DISTR: 20TH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION

...and avoid...
...and avoid...
...and avoid...

When boho bombshell
Sheba Hart (Carey Mulligan) becomes art teacher at St. George's School, her magnetism attracts not just the boys in the schoolyard, but even the staff who come into contact with her.

But Sheba is stuck in a lonely rut. Struggling to reconstitute the life she dreams it and like me it is, she strikes up a friendship with curmudgeonly Barbara (Judi Dench) – an equally lonely colleague who feels she's finally found her soulmate – and starts an affair with a student.

If this sounds like the more dangerous relationship, then Sheba is soon disabused. While she resists her desires, Barbara – a crypto lesbian and certifiable nutjob – documents the affair in



her diary, becoming the keeper of the secret. Barbara realises she has everything to gain by doing nothing, drawing Sheba deeper and deeper into her sappy bosom, while luring further and farther into an abyss of delusion. Sheba needs to wake up and smell the roasting order or she attends to lose everything.

Despite a threatening premise that offers little hope of humour, Dench's ardently overwrought, outstandingly funny. Political correctness is offset by her curt, dry speech, in which the likes of Down's Syndrome children become "court jesters". It offers a wonderfully unexpected edge to a giddy film. **Meredith Rajan**

Anticipation: Dampening audi. **Three**

Enjoyment: Comical. **Four**. **Not bad**

In Retrospect: Blameless as just say too cool. **See school:** **Four**

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

REVIEW BY
JONATHAN GOLDSTEIN

WRITTEN BY
Chris Cottam, Rankin
DIRECTED BY
Chris Cottam, Rankin
PRODUCED BY
Chris Cottam, Rankin

The Brit gangster

This gets a *Closed* rating!
In this ambitious offering from
photographer Rankin and fellow
feature newbie Chris Cottam,

When a feral child bestowed
with angelic powers descends upon
London's criminal underworld and
begins killing in tongue-in-cheek
making drama come true, you know
you've boarded that great ozymandian
of a genre: magical realism.

Financed by über-cool
clothing brand Melton Pot, *The Lives of the Saints* fails to escape
its fashion-conscious financial
reins, choosing aesthetics over
 substance every time. And while
Toby Green's screenplay is a
welcome twist to the usual muckney
spiel, narrative holes, flat acting

and a melting pot of artifice devices
makes for a real magical fableven.

After all, aspirations to
Shakespearian dialogue

laudable characterization and Ilsa
Lubman visuals do not a coherent
film make. Coated and contorted?

Unfortunately, yes. *Anette Kullend*

Anticipation. *Rankin*,
magic and rock steady.
Movie that game work,
mashable? Two

Enjoyment. Gold star for
artistic intent, but answer
me this: who the hell is
that lady? Two

In Retrospect. The boy
is clearly no angel. Two



An interview with Rankin and Chris Cottam, directors of *Lives of the Saints*.

LINLIES: Having worked together directing commercials, how did you find the leap to filmmaking?

Rankin: It's huge. Logistically-wise, you're making 30 minutes, rather than 30 seconds. You get two or three days to do a 30-second ad, while in a feature film you have to do five or six months a day. Every detail of the film has to be discussed; you can't just get the source and paint. You've got to discuss the character, the background, the lighting, the time, the acting.

Cottam: You have to sit back with a storyboard, look at it, say, half a page of thoughts. To that have 107 pages in 40 editing took.

LINLIES: Does the collaborative relationship elevate some of that pressure?

Cottam: If you direct on your own, you're the one person that everyone is owing to. We had no authority to throw ideas in.

Rankin: But you can never alleviate the pressure completely, because you want it to be perfect. Filmmaking is an addiction — it can go in so many different ways — it's crazy. For example, at one point someone said people felt that 10 minutes should be cut. We made a conscious decision not to listen to them — for us, the only reason to cut 10 minutes from a film is because the audience need to be in and out faster without having to think about it. But we made a film that's supposed to make you think.

LINLIES: Were there any points where either of you felt that you had to compromise?

Rankin: It never felt like compromise, it felt like understanding the relationship. We did have a rule that if one of us wanted to do something more than the other, then they would take the lead, and it worked.

LINLIES: From the director's chair, was there a division of labor or not?

Rankin: Not really. Maybe I would eat breakfast, while Chris was more involved with the action.

Cottam: The key is not to confuse people: I was always aware that we were on winds up together before we landed out with what we want.

LINLIES: What lessons have you taken from your experience as first-time feature directors?

Cottam: As much as there is a great learning curve, you also learn what there's a lot you still don't know.

Rankin: There's a quarter. What's worse than working with a first-time director? Working with a second-time director, because they think they know it ALL! —

LINLIES: How about working with two second-time directors?

Rankin: That's even worse. — *Anette Kullend*



BAMAKO

Directed by Abderrahmane Sissako
Written by Abderrahmane Sissako
Produced by Abderrahmane Sissako
Distributed by Film4

PG
100 mins

It's a rarity for African films to wash up in British cinemas, but if *Bamako*, the culturally and politically enriching new film from Malian-based director Abderrahmane Sissako, is any measure of quality, then the medium is headed towards a fruitful and diverse future.

Part tragic, part fable, part anti-capitalist polemic, *Bamako* oscillates between the daily routines that occur in a Malian courtyard while a trial takes place which pits the people of Africa against the World Bank, the IMF and the G8, all of whom are accused of foul play on a grand scale.

An allegation of corruption and misadministration will bring

between various local experts and the representatives of these bodies; we are swept up in an embittered and sometimes surreal conflict which highlights the isolated ironies caused by unchecked globalisation.

The cinematic element to the film is supplied by the incessant pulse of daily life. The trial is regularly disrupted by the impromptu visiting of a passer-by, the squirming shrewdness of an infant, the macabre wailing of a village elder, or the dissolution of a relationship between a bar singer and her penniless boyfriend. Of the numerous digressions that occur, perhaps the most peculiar is a robust Western entitled

Death in Tintabulu which stars (amongst others) Danny Glover and Israeli director Eitan Cohen as bedraggled gunfighters.

The fact that this important tribunal is occurring in a dusty courtyard is never fully explained, but it is perhaps symbolic of the desperation that Western-backed privatisation has created in Africa. In fact, *Bamako* thrives on transposing the extraordinary with the mundane; the trial is among the healthy, packed train carriages through expenses of nothingness and unapologetically locals brush shoulders with politicians and diplomats.

The debate itself acts as the spine of the film, and while the

relations remain unapologetically diffuse, it is just about conceivable enough to allow viewers in the field of global economics to at least trend-watch. Sure, it's sometimes a bit heavy going, but the rewards to be reaped from this original and thought-provoking piece of cinema are plentiful indeed.

Anticipation: A result of Africa's world music & hand-weld and there won't be

Enjoyment: True, polemics and an open mind are all that is required - there

In Retrospect: A less original... but



THE ILLUSIONIST

REVIEW

BY CHRISTOPHER GLOD
WITH ADVICE FROM
EDWARD NORTON,
JESSICA BiEL,
AND RUFUS SEWELL

Eisenheim (Edward Norton) is the mystical turn-of-the-century illusionist who falls in love with the beautiful Sophie (Jessica Biel), a woman far above his social standing in the sordid Viennese hierarchy. These childhood sweethearts are parted when Eisenheim is unable to fulfill Sophie's plan to "make them all disappear", and as a result he begins a journey into adulthood that sees him acquire mystical conjuring powers above and beyond those of your average children's entertainer.

Back in Vienna the two, now adults, share a chance encounter where Eisenheim learns that Sophie is engaged to the distractingly Crown Prince Leopold (Rufus Sewell). After Eisenheim publicly humiliates Leopold, the Prince demands that the illusionist be thrown in jail. This begins Eisenheim's quest to win back the love of his life from the clutches of her evil fiancé.

Theatrically Sophie does not take long to get over the will she won't she recognise the adult Eisenheim's dilemma as, despite the addition of facial hair, he looks strikingly similar and, moreover, surely one can only fall madly in love with a man of mystical powers.

see? This means that the film actually gets on with its decent storyline, and there are enough plot twists and mysteries to keep you guessing.

However, it's the performances that truly convince Norton, as the quiet and reserved Eisenheim, keeps things believable. But the film really belongs to Paul Gemmell as Chief Inspector Uhl, a man torn between his duties to Leopold and his own child-like curiosity towards Eisenheim's work.

Depending on whether you're a hardened cynic or hopeful romantic, the film's finale may or may not slightly disappoint. Yet even for those who can see the plot twist looming like a minge on the horizon, *The Illusionist* retains just enough mystery to keep you believing in movie magic. And come

Anticipation. *Concerto*, Edward Norton and Natalie Portman. *Three*.

ENJOYMENT: Keep an irregularly approaching like edge at your seat. These

In Retrospect: A more rounded skirt; no like big success, anything we possible. *Three*.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

REVIEW

BY CHRISTOPHER GLOD
WITH ADVICE FROM
EDWARD NORTON,
JESSICA BiEL,
AND RUFUS SEWELL

editions and future

Though there are no depths of self-promotion to which these actors won't sink (including Meryl's hideously botched *botox*) there is a degree of sympathy in the way they're let like cannon fodder by agents and publicists and studio bosses. If nothing else says *GloD*, at least actors are elusive, and if they're allowed to live in this weird bubble of quasi-emotional innocence, is that really their fault?

Well, yes, might be the answer, but that would only distract from the film's real target – entertainment journalists. Here is safer and emotionally other ground. Where actors are well-meaning dupes



trained like dogs to sit up and beg for love, journos see the boil on the anus of the industry — corrupt and complicit and dependent on people who, you suspect, they know only a little bit less than themselves. This is Gwart at his most vicious, but also his most visually subtle, skewering the pomposity of Arash's the Action Studio or the absurdity of El in a haircut or a single, uncomfortable silence.

These are the moments when *For Your Consideration* is jolted out of its all-too-comfortable air of lightly amused malice taking Elsewhere. It feels too much like an insiders' club like Gwart didn't really have the stomach to go for

the threat. As such it looks like the operatic bathtos of *Spiral Trap*, or even the quiet intelligence of *A Mighty Wind*. Despite the odd gag and basic worthiness, *For Your Consideration* isn't quite a contender. Hell, *Heathers*?

Anticipation: *Epically* big year Hollywood. *There*.

Enjoyment: *Individually* funny, but lacks the teeth to truly savor. *There*.

IN RETROSPECT: Even on the TV version — which still there, and it's a summer and summer and we're woken up. *There*.



WELCOME TO DONGMAKGOL

With their art being shown around Hong Kong International Film Festival

watch and await: Commander Lee (Jae-yeong Jeong) and Lieutenant Pyo (Heungsik Shin) carry the weight of the film's message with ease. Even over-inflated stereotypes (the medic, Moon, and the mother of all American imperialists) are easily forgivable.

With the end of a fantasy-filled score and a nod to all things CG, *Dongmakgol* is a visually captivating affair. Hard-line cynics apart, you'll be bewitched by the stunning opening (a fallafel Shrekshank overhead zoom-out), lulled by the tender flutter of butterflies, and blown away by the operatic finale. *Annie Kurnite*

Anticipation: # South Korea. Real good anti-war flick. *There*.

Enjoyment: If this is *Shrek*, you'll want to hear

IN RETROSPECT: There's a lingering warmth to this simple moral fable, but it won't change anybody's life. *There*.



THE BRIDGE

Directed by
Errol Morris

Supported by
The French
Cinéma Fund

The Golden Gate

Bridge is many things to many people. Including the site of more suicides than anywhere else in the world. So, inspired by an article in the *The New Yorker*, first-time director Errol Morris set his cameras up at the start of 2004 and filmed the bridge in almost every daylight hour, capturing most of the year's 34 deaths.

It begins with grim anticipation. Steel lenses fix audience with tantalizing shots of black-coated Gothic and mournful lopers gazing at the water below. An insomniac-suicidal man in a jogging suit approaches, swings one leg over the railing, perches onto the ledge below and ingloriously waddles off the edge to his death.

But *The Bridge* is no quarry-truff movie. Steel recorded over 100 hours of interviews with friends, families and survivors, and as each is allowed to say their piece the everyday human tragedy glimpsed in that first jumper is painfully revealed.

While the footage shows figures hurling themselves to their deaths, it's the interviews that tell the compelling stories of people who endured severe stressors and drugs and couldn't co-exist with the people who loved them.

As you enter the minds of the victims of such suicide the

silence that the bridge held for them becomes clear. Lingering shots show the dirty red lovers against peeling blue skies or prodding from thick fog, symbolizing in its iconic beauty the strength, resilience and irony that the 24 jumpers failed to find in their own tumultuous lives.

This is a starkly moving film, calm and steady in its objective distance, until one jump is filmed hand-held. Then it explodes into life in the penultimate jolting instant of 24:15. It's this moment, perhaps more than any other, in which Steel declassifies this dark and taboo subject, making it personal and human and compellingly tragic.

And yet the results lackluster rather than harrowing. The Bridge is a unique piece of cinema, which, in its quiet and empathy, helps us understand how people can be driven to the ultimate act of self-harm. *Steve Watson*

Entertainment: Do you want to see a *suicide* film? **Actually:** Three

Employment: Engaging and enlightening. **Three**

In Retrospect: A documentary that starts new light on a dark subject. **Four**

LWLies talks to one of the stars of *Fast Food Nation's* ensemble cast, Colombian actress Catalina Sandino Moreno.

LWLies: Is this an important film right now, given the prominence of fast food in the West?

Moreno: There are things that are happening, and people can learn about them not in the end, it's their choice whether they're going to eat well or not. I also understand that people don't have time nowadays. They're in a hurry and they just need to fill their stomachs.

LWLies: Is that true for Colombians too?

Moreno: In Colombia we have time to eat... I have breakfast, I have lunch and I have dinner. I have to have about seven — I have to sit down and take time for it. In the U.S., I wake up at 4:30 sometimes because I need to pack out. I can walk down and have enough time to eat breakfast.

LWLies: Do you find it hard to live that way in New York?

Moreno: I grew up in Colombia eating that way, and living in the States is not going to change that. It's something I don't want to lose.

LWLies: Speaking of Colombia, do you go back much?

Moreno: I try to go as much as I can. I was shooting *Love as the Time of Cholera* recently so I was down there for one and a half months.

LWLies: It must have been incredible to do the film of a Gabriel García Márquez novel in your home country. Were you read much of his stuff?

Moreno: In Colombia we're a book — I used to eat all of Marquez in college. Doing book clubs to work on books like the *Time of Cholera* was a dream come true! We shot in Cartagena — it's a magical, beautiful place. It'll capture the mood of the book and give a lot of authenticity to the film.

LWLies: What's your take on the rise of Latin American cinema with *Yo soy Juan* and *Hieroglyphics* becoming big names in Hollywood?

Moreno: We have amazing filmmakers. Nolberto Roldan, off Brazil... he just a genius. And in Colombia there's a law now that helps independent filmmakers. There are so many amazing stories that people don't know about, and people just need the money to make them.

LWLies: How do you find Colombia these days? Are you hopeful about its future?

Moreno: I don't know. I was there for a month and a half. You go back and you look at it with a different eye. I'd love to do something to help. I realize that there are big issues, and that the country needs to change.

LWLies: For example?

Moreno: Poverty. I saw poverty when I was there last time. Now you're in Colombia you're so disconnected — you just hear that 100 people get killed but you don't see how awful, like education really is.

LWLies: How come?

Moreno: Unfortunately, when you live there you just get used to it. You just get used to it and don't see it. *Vince Martini*



FAST FOOD NATION

Jessie C. Piven
Directed by Richard Linklater
Written by Richard Linklater
Produced by Jennifer Konner
Cinematography by Jennifer Konner
Edited by Jennifer Konner
Music by Jeffery Johnson

With a budget of \$1.5 million, the film is a low-budget documentary.

In 2001, Eric Schlosser put the Big Mac under the microscope. Inside, quite apart from the cow factors, he discovered the rise of mega-corporate, super-consumer American capitalism. That's a nifty shot, but isn't the movie version of Schlosser's book, *Fast Food Nation*, repeat? It's

Well, kind of. Director Richard Linklater has decided to forego a documentary in favour of a fictionalized narrative centred on the made-up Midway's burger-joint. His job PR man Don Henderson (Greg Kinnear) as he travels to small-town Colorado to investigate the Umiglobe Meat Packing plant, where 'The Big One' padres are

made. Meanwhile, a group of Mexican illegalos are smuggled over the border and put to work. And nearby, Colorado teenager Amber (Amber Johnson), a Midway's burger-flipper, starts to wonder about her employer.

There are big risks in this ensemble format; notably that the end result has none of the polemic force of documentary, and little of the dramatic verve of cinema. While Linklater doesn't fall lock stock into that trap, there's something odd about watching a fictional movie in which the narrative message is so overt. Okay, fast food is bad, but if that's the programmatic snit,

much more nourishing than, well, a 'Big One.'

There's a telling symptom of that problem, and it arrives in the form of Bruce Willis' brilliant cameo as Harry Rydell, the Midway's meat buyer who has been turning a blind eye to Umiglobe's contaminated meat and illegal workers for years. In a two-handed scene with Henderson, Rydell is allowed to argue back. "Fast food tastes great," he says, and if you're afraid of sky-high germs, all you have to do is cook it properly. It's an electric monologue—and for a moment *Fast Food Nation* properly comes to life. You see, it can entertain, and if one persuade, but

it can't quite do both at the same time. Devil-may-care

Anticipation It's not a documentary? Could be terrible. See

Enjoyment Fascinating meat cuts—see what's new a place off new becomes a big hit. Three

In Retrospect Break-out and compelling stories, but feels a bit like film-by-numbers. Two

Not an exclusive interview with Richard Linklater, simply unable ever to pigeonhole



AMAZING GRACE

DIRECTED BY Michael Balcon
STARRING Judi Dench, Helen Mirren,
Colin Firth, Helena Bonham Carter

PG-13
128 mins

ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

DIRECTED BY Tom Hanks
STARRING Tom Hanks, Milla Jovovich,
Keanu Reeves, David Strathairn

PG-13
128 mins

This inspiring account of how the young MP Wilberforce (Ewan McGregor) pioneered the political movement that led to the abolition of the slave trade 200 years ago is a typically understated British production that is brought alive by glorious performances from some of our best thespians, particularly a gloriously on-form Albert Finney. Entertaining and educational, it is a powerful example of the changes that can be wrought through political will – an important reminder in our present-day disillusionment. *Bob Wootton*

At the same time as he was writing the brutal *Unleashed*, Len Wiseman was also developing *Arthur and the Invisibles*, a film which includes childhood innocence, Arthur (Freddie Highmore) is an adventurous 10-year-old who is transported to the tiny Kingdom of the Minimeys where he joins Princess Selena (Maddie Ziegler) on a quest to rescue his grandfather's subjects from the evil Malazec (David Bowie). Taking a cue from *Middle-earth*, this is an old-fashioned children's fantasy tale that won't be for everyone, but it *will* never intent to be. *Jessica Williams*



THE FAMILY FRIEND

DIRECTED BY Karen Krasner
STARRING Jennifer Lopez, Lucy Liu,
Dame Judi Dench, Leah Remini

PG-13
128 mins



CHARLOTTE'S WEB

DIRECTED BY Gary Winick
STARRING Ewan McGregor,
Leah Thompson, Emma Thompson

PG-13
128 mins

The bittersweet life of an ugly lone shark is the story that courses through Paolo Sorrentino's follow-up to the ambitiously bleak *The Consequences of Love*. *The Family Friend* cuts a fine balance between the stylized and the mundane in a laudable redolence of *Kesavado*. The constantly moving camera serves to build upon Sorrentino's carry-on use of music and location. Although often mordantly funny, the film also wears a deep sense of sorrow on its sleeve, as one elderly character imparts early on: "Everyone is unhappy. Everyone." *Brent Jenkins*

Young Fern (Dakota Fanning) saves Wilbur the invisible pig from a sure death and sends him to live on her uncle's farm. Here he tries desperately to find some playmates among the sulky animals who foresee nothing but gloom, doom and some fine chompables for Christmas. Then along comes a spider named Charlotte, who shows the farmhands that he really is more than just "some pig". *Charlotte's Web* may be the film equivalent of *sausage and meat*, but it's a wonderful tale of friendship and loyalty. *AJW Memmi Rajesh*



AFTER THE WEDDING

DIRECTED BY Susanne Bier
STARRING Kristin Scott Thomas, Peter Sarsgaard
RELEASED 10 JUNE



BECOMING JANE

DIRECTED BY Julianne Moore
STARRING Anne Hathaway, Tom Felton
RELEASED 10 JUNE

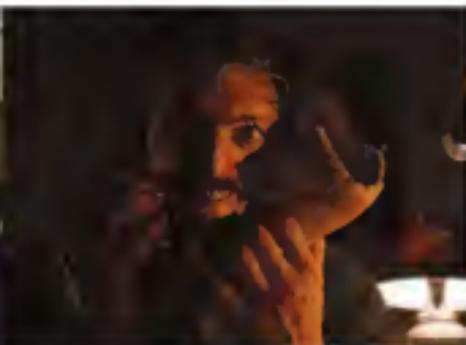
Danish director Susanne Bier has turned in yet another fine film with this study of Jacob (Mads Mikkelsen), an aid worker in India who returns to Copenhagen to secure future financing for his charity, and is inadvertently ushered into the arms of his estranged daughter. Shot essentially on unlovely DV, the build up is a little too slow and the humour quotient could have been apposite slightly, but other than that this is a delicate and resounding examination into the nature of the paternal bond. Denzel Jenkins

Anne Hathaway dons a corset and cut-glass British accent to play the frustrated young author of *Pride and Prejudice*, while man-of-the-moment Julianne Moore takes on the role of youngish scamp Tom Felton, who inadvertently sweeps her off her feet. Despite a script bogged down with pseudo-Austen wit, Hathaway carries off the fluctuating moods of Jane without grating, but Moore lacks the brooding demeanour of a suitably rugged romantic here. Neither can prevent the film from floundering into sentimentality. Helen Crowley



RUNNING WITH SCISSORS

DIRECTED BY Julian Schnabel
STARRING Joaquin Phoenix, Helen Hunt, Alfre Woodard
RELEASED 10 JUNE



SATAN

DIRECTED BY Michael Cimino
STARRING Vincent Cassel, Rosalie Thomass, Odile Vuillemin
RELEASED 10 JUNE

Fourteen year-old Augusten Burroughs is a much belaboured child. His father (Al Pacino) refuses to accept his inverse charge calls for help. His mother (Annette Bening) is busy slathering ointments down her gaunt. His mother's psychiatrist (Bette Midler) with whom he lives, is flat out insane, preferring messages sent to him by God in the unlikely form of his bowel movements to any semblance of rational thought. It'd all be hugely engaging, were it not for the fact that it's utterly nauseating. Denzel Jenkins

One thing you learn from watching movies is that there is something inherently wrong with rural communities, and Satan upholds this law with vigour. Combining elements of *The Wicker Man*, Hammer horror and *Madame Python* the result is a bewildering mess of second-rate scriptwriting, bad acting and a paucity of ideas that begs the question, 'Who thought it would be a good idea to make this film and where did they get the money?' Vincent Cassel gets a particularly raw deal as both halves of an incestuous couple. Nasty. Andy Devine



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THE BLACK SECTION





**IN WHICH WE
DISCUSS THE
MEDIUM
OF FILM
IN ITS MANY
MESMERISING FORMS.
EDITED WITH ZEN
PRECISION BY
DAVID JENKINS AND
DESIGNED BY
THE DRUNKEN
MASTER.
ROB LONGWORTH**





KING OF COOL

RICHARD LINKLATER, DIRECTOR OF *FAST FOOD NATION*, IS A SLACKER HERO – THE EVERYDAY JOE WHO CONQUERED HOLLYWOOD. DAVID JENKINS BUSTS SOME QUESTIONS ON HIS ASS.



When we conduct an interview at *LIFT*art, one of the questions we try to ask all of our subjects is "What do you have to say about film?" If you think about it for a moment, it's deceptively simple question of which 'elegance' is the conclusion at which many inevitably arrive. Not so with Richard Linklater. His film career is on passing par with such unpretentious and whimsical questions: "What's even meant a great work about the movie effort required in order to be a great film?" asked the Demyevishly Maronite in 1997's *Slacker*. "Isn't everything we do in life a way to be loved a little more?" asks Celene in 1995's *Before Sunrise*. "Hey, are you a dreamer?" asks the Man on the Moon in 2000's *Waking Life*.

With almost 20 years in the film business behind him, he should have a damn good answer for this one. A naturally enquiring and mild-mannered gentelman, Linklater, like the dialogue in his films, is always ready to take weird and wonderful paths to locate plausible and thought-provoking answers.



As a prelude to the bulk of the conversation about his new film *Far Fried Nation*, we get to talking about other new movies. "I just saw *Maria & Michael* the other day. I took my daughter." What did she think of it? "I think I liked it more than she did. She liked the costumes and everything but thought there could have been more to the story." No, I told her, that's the bold conceptual thing – to have a story about nothing. "I love the idea of taking \$40 million to make a movie about having nothing. That's my kind of movie."

Following *J. Summer Darkly*, his animated adaptation of a story written by Philip K. Dick, Linklater collaborated with writer Eric Schaeffer to make a fictional version of his award-winning novel, *Far Fried Nation*. The film constitutes an ensemble cast – a reassembled cast of his earlier films – with a subject matter that is both deeply polarized and, at times, uncomfortably compromised.

It's a film which bears in director's unmistakable stamp. Does he agree? Doesn't know Linklater is having none of it. "I'd rather talk about other movies. That would be bold, doesn't it? People are expecting to hear about *Far Fried Nation*, but we'd be bold if we didn't even mention it."

Film: Let's be bold. What about the recent Hollywood trend for big ensemble casts and omniscient narrators, a tradition that *Far Fried Nation* adheres to. "Haven't there always been, thought All of America. The polarized extremes, films like *Network*, *All the President's Men* or *Skins of Silver*? I think that's the history of the political film. You're going to take on a subject and, by its own definition, you want to be able to see it from different angles."

There are plenty of bold characters in *Far Fried Nation*. Take, for instance, the fact that the lead character, an ex-con in Mickey's lawyer days, is cast as the lead character in the film's narrative, a unconvincingly written out of the film about half-way through. Or what about the mismatched characters closing those of the kill-off of a subplot where the candles are chopped up and passed? "The quantum of Fannen's

characters leaving the movie is how I had to pitch it. They said to me, 'The lead guy isn't supposed to disappear out of a film,' to which I said, 'Did you ever see that movie *Pysde?* You think Janet Leigh is the lead and then you go off with Anthony Perkins for whatever reason?' And what about the kill board? "The movie doesn't deliver on everything, except the one thing you wish it wouldn't. People discuss how dark the kill floor is, and you see loads of them in it, but it's sort of this unreliability on a narrative level. By putting it at the end and having it, on some unconscious level, complete a story."

The film, he admits, resonates with him on a personal level, so many of the younger characters who pick up the narrative baton are only just beginning to discover the perils/benefits of adult life. "I was an offshore oil-worker, an early woman to a woman's just a paramedic job, a wait-up job. I was the guy who had thirty jobs that didn't ever pay anything. I never had any insurance. I lived with my family and wasn't one of those people who got a summer job with top pop company. I was always the bimbo at the summer or the daughter I viewed the world through the eyes of a person with a shitty job and didn't know what the film is about. Which is ironic now that I've probably got the best job ever devised by humanity."

So is now the right time for a film which is heavily critical of the fast food industry? "The fact that *Far Fried Nation* exists just tells me it is. It doesn't reflect what's in the air. The fact that this can get financed and made means that there are people out there who are thinking that there's an audience, whether there is or not. Just the fact that it exists says something."

Then bang. Our allotted time drolly over the dying seconds. There's only time for one more question. He'll love this one. The question we ask everyone. The thing we all really, really want to know. "What do you think about *Michael Clayton*?" *Well*. "Actually, to hell with it. Let's be bold. It's what he would have wanted."

Linklater's *Far Fried Nation* is released on March 17, and is reviewed on page 11.



FESTIVAL PREVIEW 2007

CANNES, BERLIN AND VENICE MAY GET ALL THE ATTENTION, BUT THOSE WHO DELVE A LITTLE DEEPER WILL FIND THAT THERE ARE NUMEROUS FILM FESTIVALS ACROSS THE CONTINENT THAT WILL ENTICE, EXCITE AND ENTHUSE. WHETHER YOU'RE A FILMMAKER OR JUST A FILM FAN, LAURENCE BOYCE GIVES YOU A HEADS UP ON SOME OF THE FESTIVALS YOU SHOULD REALLY MAKE THE EFFORT TO GO TO DURING 2007.

5TH BERLIN TALENT CAMPUS FEBRUARY 10-15

Running alongside the Berlin Film Festival, the Talents Campus gives young directors, producers, actors, composers and many others the chance to attend workshops and seminars given by international stars, who have previously included Anthony Minghella and Mike Leigh, while earning new contacts and sharing ideas. Being selected for the campus is tough – since less than 1,600 applicants from all over the world were accepted for the year ahead – but details of the public for events are available on limited numbers and worth making as there's an impudent and creative vibe there that's second to none. www.berlinale.de/talents/

47TH KRAKOW FILM FESTIVAL MAY 31-JUNE 5

Despite being one of the oldest and most respected film festivals in the world, the Krakow Film Festival is only just starting to become noticed amongst cineastes in Western Europe. About time too as the festival – which specialises in shorts and documentaries – gives a different perspective on the medium, and will provide partners with some truly unique films. And in the atmosphere of the Spodek concert, where the majority of the films are shown, and the highlight of the day itself, and the festival will come to an enjoyable stop apart so many just say away from the vodka as you might forget what you've seen. www.kff.pl

20TH HAMBURG INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL JUNE 6-11

While the so called '6' List' film festivals are mainly noted as making sure everyone knows how important everyone else is, Hamburg reveals an intriguing people together in which some of the best short films from around the world. It lacks machismo, albeit pretension and generally makes fun of all the conventions of how a film festival 'should' be run (as per its official T shirt boldly proclaiming, 'I had my film rejected from the Hamburg Short Film Festival'). A varied programme – an international competition, a no budget section and the wonderful 'Meister Quälker' – combined with the festival club, which will see you drinking until the sun comes up. No wonder, generally don't even need the afternoon. Quite simply, it's one of the most relaxed and enjoyable film festivals in the world. www.alerfilm.com

LUND INTERNATIONAL FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL (SEE RIGHT) SEPTEMBER 13-22

This Swedish based festival – specialising in fantasy, horror and sci-fi movies – will be extra special during 2007 as it will play host to the Malmö FFDr. This award goes to the best European Fantastic Feature and Short Film, with films nominated or the festivals that make up of the European Fantastic Film Festival Federation. Not only will the ceremony premiere great titles, but the festival itself will serve up the best in European horror, weird cracking comedy and – being a horror-based festival – a unique atmosphere, shanks to ruled audiences if you think modern movies aren't scary, then look and may be the place to go to change your mind. www.iff.se





CINEMA CHINA

MARK COUSINS IS THE CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF 'CINEMACHINA', A TRAVELLING FESTIVAL OF CHINESE FILM FROM THE '50S TO THE PRESENT DAY THAT KICKS OFF IN EDINBURGH IN LATE FEBRUARY. HE GIVES EW.COM THE LOWDOWN.

EW.COM: Where did the idea for 'Cinema China' originate and how did you go about putting the festival together?

Mark Cousins: The idea came from the University of Edinburgh. The year before last I signed an agreement with the Beijing Film Academy so they wanted to do something to mark this. They contacted me because I had run the Edinburgh Film Festival.

My co-director, Dargot Ganterek, and I came up with the idea of looking at something that was particularly 'Chinese' [FPEC, Hong Kong and Taiwan, rather than People's Republic only]. And we wanted to look not just at contemporary Chinese film but the whole evolution, from the great silent period onwards.

'It's this kind of ambition – to tell the big story of Chinese film – but we also wanted a full program of contextualising historical lectures. I think we've got around 20 lectures on Chinese film, architecture, society, design, history, etc.'

EW.COM: Is there a danger in which Chinese cinema is seen as something of a 'foreign culture' or 'European film'? Are you at aware of the historical nature of Chinese film as we are of their European equivalents?

MC: I'd put it much stronger. I think we are appallingly blind to many great national film traditions. Most people know almost nothing about Africa or South America or even China.

There has been a sense of forgetting about what great work China did in film before, and that's partly because of its own political history. But just because China fared well in the twentieth century doesn't mean that people who love movies should ignore or undervalue it.

EW.COM: There are detractors from some countries who react quite strongly against the idea of a national cinema, and who believe that thinking in these terms is not a helpful way of getting to grips with a country's cinematic output. Where do you stand on that?

MC: I've been hearing that argument for 20 years. Some of the best books on China, particularly Mary Parpart's, and Chen Derry's recent book, *China as Screen Cinema and Nation*, look to the idea of 'nation' as one thing and 'China' as another thing. It's not that the nation produces film, as much as Chinese film is going to do what it does anyway, but it relates to nation – it helps build a sense of nationalhood.

So it is a complicated thing, certainly, but especially in parts of the world that are quite 'locked off', like China or Iran, the question of nation actually becomes quite important because filmmakers are constantly trying to find ways to express themselves without being monitored by the state.

EW.COM: Is there one aspect of the festival that you're particularly looking forward to?

MC: Overall, what I believe passionately is that the engine that drives movies is innovation. So we have 21 films from across the part of the world, all of which are innovative. Matt Groening!

Check out the full coverage of the interview at www.ew.com

'Cinema China' kicks off in Edinburgh on 1st February. For our in-depth conversation with him for the details

SILENT FILM SEASON

ANDREW YOODELL HAS BEEN PLAYING PIANO ACCOMPANIMENTS FOR SILENT FILMS FOR OVER 40 YEARS. EVER SINCE HIS FATHER, THE ORGANISER OF A LOCAL FILM SOCIETY, ROPED HIM IN TO IMPROVISE ALONGSIDE GERMAN FILM SIEGFRIED AT THE AGE OF 15, IN JANUARY HE ACCCOMPANIED BUSTER KEATON'S SHERLOCK JR. AT THE BARBICAN - THE FIRST INSTALMENT OF A SILENT FILM SERIES THAT LASTS UNTIL JUNE.

LIFT: *What does it take to be a silent film accompanist?*

Youdell: The thing about accompanying a film playing scored music is that it's all improvisation. When it's done, improvisation has a kind of three way feel to it. You look at the film and you respond to it, and also that you've never thought of before comes to you. You can create tunes, vary them, develop them, have instruments for each character, and you get an atmosphere from the audience who are responding not only to the film but also to the music.

No show is the same, which is the thing that interests me. Every time you see a film, you approach it as though you've never done it before. Even if it's something like *Marietta* which you've played 30, 40, 50 times, there can be a completely different feel to the film with each performance. The audience is different and you're different; it's like creating something new every time.

LIFT: *Are silent movies becoming more popular again?*

Youdell: Oh yes, absolutely, every year there are more people doing it.

LIFT: *What does good accompaniment add to the experience of watching a film?*

Youdell: It should be interesting enough on its own right to be good in music, and it should comment, associatively, on substances in the film and on character development. What you try to do is a lateral accompaniment of things happening on the screen, it's the mood you're trying to recreate.

LIFT: *With all the technological advances that movie making has undergone, why are silent films from the '20s and '30s still watched?*

Youdell: The '20s and '30s were probably the best two decades of cinema history, when everybody was still learning their craft. It was a period of tremendous innovation throughout the world, and no film from one country looked like any film from another. American pictures had their style, Soviet Union films of the '20s; French film had a very anarchic style of style, even British films had some characteristics. There was tremendous variety and people were doing things that had never been done before.

LIFT: *What's your favorite film to accompany?*

Youdell: *Our* silent shows are loads I have done *Napoleon*, which is a five-and-a-half hours long and probably the greatest film ever made. If you haven't seen *Napoleon*, you haven't seen a silent film.

LIFT: *What's the best thing about the job?*

Youdell: I did a Keaton silent film once and there were lots in the audience who fell off their chairs laughing. You feel that's what it's all about, that's the best you can do. It serves to keep the art of silent film alive for new audiences and a pays tribute to the people who made the pictures then who are long gone, who never thought their film would still be around now *for liftoff!*



HOW TO BE
A
DETECTIVE

THE WRONG ARM OF THE LAW: THE TOTALITARIAN COP GENRE

There is a theory that a move to the suburbs by wealthy officers of the fint police forces anathema: numerophobia was not easily conceivable. Someone, it is suggested, had to make sure the gun-totting plebs didn't just smash the place up. While the argument doesn't really hold water when comes to, say, London's Holloway Road or Manchester in its entirety, there is a pleasing symmetry to a which-hits-well-with-the idea that police are, above all, instruments of the state. The problem arises when it comes to the "F" word, often followed by the "F" word.

You may not realize, but there is quite a difference between the kind of "Pacino Cop" who will hop you with his truncheon at a demonstration for cutting his name, and those who will drag you to a commando-styled football stadium, send you to a concentration camp, or simply knock you out of a helicopter at 12,000 feet.

The former have featured on a thousand films from *The Blue Lamp* to *The Steel Bubble*, but few filmmakers have had the skill or the nerve to tackle the latter; the straight-up cops from

early organs, the men who wear bolo ties to stamp on human faces, the men ultimately more menacing and perverse than even the most avaricious of their democratic brethren.

While the ideologically flabby *Garbagemen* was allowing the Workers' Paradise to fall apart like a pair of knocked-off Lawn's from Marsh, it was inevitable that someone would take a gander at combating the cold war with the brutish cop movie. *Red Heat* (1984) starred Arnold Schwarzenegger as Danko, a Soviet policeman (only lacking a plausibly efficient department — Central Directorate for Recruiters Correspond at the like) pursuing a Russian drug baron to Chicago, where he's mixed up with American general James Belushi. Director Walter Hill had already created the ultimate mismatched cop pairing with Nolte and Murphy in *48 Hours*, but perhaps he felt he hadn't fully explored the rocky road to Grudging Respect Between Men.

Schwarzenegger is undercover in the snowbound backhouse of a Soviet iron foundry with nothing but a face towel to cover his, now Fairing from our torch-like room to another, each packed with cold,

machines, he exchanges lingering looks with the guys who also seem to have misplaced their own moustache. The

perfumey plot is resolved easily through car chases and die-in explosions, but what makes *Red Heat* it isn't so much to have "Danko, changed by his journey on the dark heart of capitalism." Schwarzenegger ends the movie at he begins, a Soviet colonel surrounded by doubts, one suspect, too much Thinking About Things. Only now, instead of a noisy sword, he's wearing a policeman's uniform. And there's no such thing about that.

Has an SS uniform been anything but camp since *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1994) was adapted by Wolf Bieringer? Stanley Kubrick from the Robert Harris novel, and cleverly depicts an auto destroying with Roger Daltrey's SS policeman Xavier March. Out of uniform, Xavi is an amoral scrooge, which makes his morning routine all the more disturbing — skin, tie, trousers, Swastika armband, cap with skull insignia, quick coffee.

In 1944 in a Cold War world divided between the United States and a vacuous Nazi Germany,

where peace is possible only because the Nazis have managed to keep the Holocaust a secret. When March's investigation lead him to the truth – amazingly, the Jews weren't all executed as a Maltese Captain of the Reich – the Gestapo begins to take an unhealthy interest in him.

Blasier, to his credit, overcomes the handicap of being the more Nozzi looking actor you could possibly think of. Far him as the soiled, stoned, excreted or beaten dog goes for 'badness' among his driven chisel days and you'd still expect him to click his teeth while he shuns, 'You can't buy her socket van der mache BEFORE BOARDING!' But his improving relatability makes March's mission we're rooting for despite the rare and certain knowledge that he drinks his P.O. Tips from a Swarovski mug and woefully smiles, 'Ah, Shove myf people.'

Uniforms of a different but no less shocking kind open John Malkovich's *The Dancer (2004)* where Javier Bardem as Detroit Rejex shows us the hideousness for the good cap in the service of bad men. It is the epitome of the quiet, demented man whose circumstances – charged with delivering subversives to

the military court – rear at his sense of self. The great achievement here is that we share his abhorrence; the army-backed regime of Pejmanian (a Prince Minister as up as Sir Jack) as gauntless he could only fix his general disengagement from living in Tokyo was harsh and indolent, but Rejex' target is the most bizarre, coldest tribal savagery in Latin America.

Guillermo Del Toro's *El laberinto del fauno* (based on the traditional leader of The Shining Path guerrillas who unleashed a reign of terror and mass execution in Peru in the 1980s). The dogs hanging from lamp posts were the signature of the real Shining Path. The movement's savagery would dominate the bodies of their victims. Del Toro was never silent as a Marquis Bardem's Rejex is a world away from such benthic, and what's more telling about his character is the importance of the video of Costa Gavras' *State of Siege*, where the Greek's style relies on massive generalization by forensic, catastrophic scenes. Malkovich presents Rejex framed in gentle light, apart of civilization, an extraordinary creation in an extraordinary film.

And so on the future and a message to Billy Zane, *West End war*, director, painter and skipperman Billy, there are still copies of *Magnolia* for sale at \$2.99 a pop. Didn't you have some of your people take care of that? No doubt someone, somewhere, is proud to have worked on the rightful heir to *Pelhamton 482*, this being a tale of a dysopian future where all 'modest' is banned – a grammatical necessity that sets the tone for the entire film.

Zane plays a Media Policeman, a poor lifer whose only joy in life is hunting warthogs in full furiously disturbing gait watching gaily Selected for a special mission to Megaville, the last place on earth where people are free to enjoy 'modus', Zane realises that the headaches and backbeats that have been troubling him probably mean he's had a transmission/camera/mind-control/ bending ascendancy has brain by his superiors for their own interests and, Fortunately, they too are victims of an incomprehensible script, and Billy is able to escape their clutches by not answering his telephone – a survival trick he would have dear will to pull when the call came offering him the job.

USUAL SUSPECTS

THE LIVES OF OTHERS (2006)

DIR. FLORIAN HENCKEL VON DONNERMARCK

Rightly based for an effort to get cosy with DDR nostalgia, *Death Maintenance* is great as the morose, troubled Stasi officer acted by his obsessed host to spy on a famous actress and her husband in the dying days of the régime.

V FOR VENDETTA (2005)

DIR. JAMES MCGEEUE

Literally half a good *Slim Cup* (and *Postman Always* prison) worth working with for the performance of Stephen Rea as desiccative Gordon Deacon

GODSKY PARK (1993)

DIR. MICHAEL AptED

Natch

DVD OF THE MONTH

BY NICK FURNELL

LUIS BURUEL BOX SET (1960-1977)

DIR: LUIS BURUEL
AVAILABLE: NOW

Born of the Bergerac generation, he was never Hitchcockian, though there's something big, uncomplicated and fatalistic about his cinema. Many of the eight films in this box set of the Spanish auteurist but (predominantly French-language) works could be passed in a single坐ure, complete with stroking, unbreakable imagery. *Contrepartie* of the calendar, *Sale de jeu* (1967), also released in a brand-new French-language print by the NFT, might be summarised as young, sexually fulfilled housewives. (*Catherine Desperée*) takes the afternoon shift at a local brothel; and a punctuated walk has aphrodisiac sexual function, male as being dubbed a "speculator" and picked up.

According to the accompanying disc full disc liner documentation, though *Sale de jeu* also includes a commentary by Buruel expert, Professor Peter Williams (below), it was such an offbeat portrait of female masochism that *Éditions* (1969) — featuring Jeanne Moreau as a woman who begins by trying to wound her wife with sharp needles — was deemed too explicit for public screening. Lucas would begin sentences by saying, "I wanted to talk about female masochism, but it's completely useless — I'm going to show you fully dressed."

The *Barber Shop* of the *Aspirante* (1972) is a similarly compactly encased classic, revolving around a group of middle-aged women who find their career paths interrupted at a library of sexual ways — whether it's scheduling, menstruation, a corpse, a pair of hairy legs, a theatre audience, an authority figure, some readers — while the director becomes *Prostitute* (1976), set in 1930 Toledo, with all



an older man (Bernard Rey) exploring his position as guardian to a naive, ungrateful adolescent (Delphine Desvergne). The *Obscure Object* of *Desire* (1977), Buruel's quiet final film, explores similar territory with Ray again represented by a young lover, played by two extremes — cold blonde Beatrix and hot Angèle Moreau — who goes to absurdly extreme lengths to avoid consummating their relationship.

In his autobiography, Buruel remembers kitting the two extremes into one of his beds, marins factitious reversal to some dark corner of a lateral bar (see opposite) and you can feel that these *asymétriques* argue in the very title: "What off? remains partly unfold and stored out — most keenly in the meandering *The Milk Way* (1968) and *The Barber* (1972), both undeniably surreal, queerly torpid and particularly topical. The first shows two Catalans digging at two cemeteries below the medieval *Aragó* route, from Peralta to Santiago de Compostela, on the last

winters tip of Spain, the sexual interplay between old frauds and virgins was some northeast pervertion on top, involving various infantil and adult characters, and the simplest expression of an almost man-eating pathology in the novel.

The *crossing* (1974) does the odd one out: the unusual story of a *Shambala* (1964), which kicked off this late French cycle, stars as a social drama as Jeanne Moreau goes to work in a country house in Villefranche, then reluctantly involving murder mystery when a young girl is found raped and murdered. Buruel shallfully uses the innocent's slaughter with bearings on femininity and the rule of nature.

The Young One (1966), Buruel's second (and final) film in English, shot in Mexico, has familiar themes — it's the story of a handicapped (Stanley Reed) son on a present stand game, carried who has also lost his hand — charge while a black thug in (Jacques Brellois) arrives having a fake sign change in rugged realism finds especially different



from anything else in this collection. Regarded as a flop on release, as casual audiences were perhaps ahead of its time, it nevertheless received a special mention at Cannes, and — unfolding rapidly, belatedly, never quite here you go — good as a somewhat neglected masterpiece.

Drink and... think like Luis Buñuel

MANY OF Buñuel's household items were born in his daily reveries in the dark recesses of a famous life and in my mind's eye, beyond time, open to the images that happened to appear in what is his relationship to *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1951. It might be thinking about something private — family business, a new property — when all of a sudden a picture would snap into focus, characters emerge, speak, set in their pastures.

To provoke, or confirm, a dream, a night in a bar, he slept, "having drunk English beer, especially in the form of dry Martin," — devoting a page of his book to The cold sunset, which *After the Rain* gives you no longer. He slept as a dream, in bed, up closely and compactly packed raving scenes.

The dry before your meals — cream and all the ingredients — glass, gas, oil, water — in the refrigerator. For a thermos to make rare the ice at 20 degrees below zero [cold enough so a donut will melt]. Don't take anything out until your friends arrive, then pour a few drops of Noilly Prat and half a dessertspoon of Angostura bitters over the ice blocks, then pour a cup, keeping only the ice, which creates a frost just outside. Then pour straight gin over the ice, shake a cigar and write.

DVDS

BEST DISCS PACKED WITH MOVIE GOODNESS

NORMAN MCLAREN
DVD BOX SET
DIR. NORMAN
MCLAREN
AVAILABLE:
FEBRUARY 26

You probably won't have heard the name. You probably won't even recognize the films. But that remarkable box set containing the life and work of master animator Norman McLaren is one of the most visually stunning and, frankly, original things you'll see all year.

Afforded artistic freedom by the National Film Board of Canada for whom he worked exclusively, these films range from the jazzy colour cuts of *Supervolt* (1946) to the charming anti-war parable *Neighbours*. We visited with Dan McWilliams, a neighbour and close friend of McLaren's, who helped oversee the production of the box set.

Q: How long had the box set been in the pipeline?
AMcWILLIAMS: I think the production time was about two and a half years, but the idea of restoring McLaren's films was proposed in about 2000.

ELFLINE: What was your role?

AMcWILLIAMS: I had worked for McLaren and known him for a long time, and there was an apocryphal belief I was even supposed to write a biography. During that early period, he decided to go through everything he'd ever made with me, including all the tests. I then made a very hasty decision to keep after all of his work. He had this room at a basement where he had a bunch of shelves, and I started up cataloguing and reworking all the stuff; there was not any person who knew what the stuff meant, and physically



whereas I was, I got involved early on. My job was to make sure that the people who were restoring the old films were getting the right kind of colour and that everything was done correctly.

ELFLINE: The colorful artwork is key to much of McLaren's work. How did you retain that when transferring them to DVD?

AMcWILLIAMS: In large part, original prints of his films

per didn't exist. It was a case of finding the best materials available. What I did was look at every negative, every master, every test and selected the best quality stuff, which then became the basis of the restoration. Using the colour right was the most important thing, colours that should have red had faded to pink/orange, so we had to get in what we believed were the originals — luckily for us, McLaren



had a very precise idea of what red he liked and what blues he liked and so on. The problem was the complicated colouring process; several of the films had to be done frame by frame. The big thing she was not to interfere with McLaren's natural manner. For example, in some of the films his hand appears, or in *Neighbours* his shadow appears in the shot.

ELFLINE: What about the sound, how did you tackle that?

AMcWILLIAMS: Well, the sound there was a lot of debate. I wanted the sound cleaned up and made as modern as possible. The more extreme thing they did was a film called *Lapse*, where two loops of sound went back and forth across a different screen. In the original it was just music to the visual, but now from the centre of the screen. We shifted on the sound of the left loop come from the left and vice versa.

ELFLINE: The title block borders around the edge of each cinematic slide.

AMcWILLIAMS: We decided to float the image because in some cases McLaren sometimes right to the edge of the frame, and in the old world of VHS you lost parts of the screen. Originally we were just going to float a few, but then we decided that would confuse the viewer. There were some complaints as well, so, I mean, when that was the basis of the whole thing really, it was a very slow process, a lot of people working very hard and being out to question all our decisions as we went along.

ELFLINE: More chapters in the box set?

AMcWILLIAMS: No, just everything that exists in three *DVD*s.

DOUGLAS SIRK COLLECTION (1952-1959)

DIR: DOUGLAS SIRK

AVAILABLE, NOW

When Douglas Sirk left Germany in 1933, he swapped his theatre career to become perhaps the greatest practitioner of Hollywood melodrama. *Written on the Wind*, *Gaslight*, *T怀ing Buddies* for all faculty savings, but here, despite being暮暮ly, and lively Dorothy Malone creates a model of a prima donna in her class. While Rock Hudson was Sirk's leading star of classic, it's apparent that these films, deservedly associated with "women's issues," have many wonderful female leads. Aly Khan, star of *Woman in Love*, Jane Wyman falls for gardener Hudson in *An Ideal Husband*, and Sirk's valentine *Portrait of Life* has Luis Alberni and Joanne Moore caught in a typically bleak look at life post-WWII divorce. Other film fare include *All I Desire*, *The Tarnished Angels* and *Magnificent Obsession* — showcases for Sirk's signature style, which belies an incredibly bitter undercurrent. *Mr. Bland* is through a mirror, in your Turkish Delight.

If I Live!

Douglas Sirk's brilliant career was overshadowed by one central tragedy: Born Hans Detlef Fehling in Hamburg in 1909, while he was Germanay 40 years later with his second — Jewish — wife, Kirk had to

leave behind the son from his first marriage, Claus Detlef Sennert, because the blue-eyed boy rose of Nazi caustic but was killed on the Russians front in 1944. The film *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* is Sirk's evocation of the last weeks of his son's life. After leaving Hollywood in 1959, the director's last film was "An university project for his students in Munich each year's masterpiece of which their famous script they would produce — Kirk made the one that cancellation."

Defiance!

Though often seen as kinder or camp, Douglas Sirk's films — and those of fellow emigre Max Ophuls — were great champions of women's rights. Despite the supposedly very tragic of home and family, this talk of *All I Desire*, or Ophuls' *The Kreidoscope Moment*, showed the plight of women much in small cover love, and their powerlessness without an ounce of their own. *Master Werner Finck* could *All That Heaven Allows* in 1955 as *Fear* that the final — like this with the gardener love interest a *Mormon* goat worker in Germany — while *Gold* *Hannah* carried the same source five years ago as *Far from Heaven*, starring Julianne Moore. And Sirk's influence spread from Alfred Hitchcock to Melville, through *Edward R. Robinson* in *Curse of the Cat People* (opposite Jennifer Jones). *Mr.*



CROWDOS (1985)

DIR: RON FRICKE

AVAILABLE, FEBRUARY 26

Showing from March date, with only music for company, you have to import the audio track, then the credits of course and *Una Strega* (or repeat the movie, as the concluding words of a hyperbolic, operatic, almost picaresque film, make some. But once you can sit in the comfort of a car, vector, come home playfully by film and musical *Una Strega* (or *Una Strega*) and some repetitive commentary from David Attenborough, it's inevitable. Seeing video suddenly in full HD is seconds like watching some black lighter flicker and off in the course of a hyperbole, and you're experiencing the beauty of cinema, which you can't. What is good strategy to benefit, in such, but to bring people between the discs, rather than physical format of the film and its notion of *Una Strega* plus what's going to shock about Michael Sera's new biography that follows, as the music continues on the screen and again life will you be left with an image of rippled light and a hidden greeting to another left eye and the blue *Mr. Dismal*.

"THREE FILMS BY MIKO NARUSE (1931-1955)
DIR: MIKO NARUSE
AVAILABLE: NOW

Having begun his directorial career relatively late, and subsequently suffered the vagaries of the Japanese studio system, Miko Naruse has long lived in the shadow of his acclaimed contemporaries, Yasujiro Ozu and Kenji Mizoguchi. This volume of DVDs seeks to change that, showcasing three of Naruse's acclaimed post-war films—*giri* (*Revenge*), *Eiga* (*Theater*) and *Chinjuro*.

Revenge (1951) follows the fortunes of Michio Okunio (Otarai's off-again-once-fiancee Haru) and her husband Hatsu as they struggle to make ends meet in the suburbs of Osaka. Okunio's wage barely covers the running of the household, and relations are further

strained by the arrival of her pony-mad 12-year-old daughter, Kikuji, struggling against an unfeeling or tyrannical boyfriend in a plot explored in *Sound of the Mountain* (1954). That time, the pale-eyed Kikuko finds solace from her sexist husband in the unlikely form of her father (ex-law, Mr. Ogata).

Mr. Ogata's sage wisdom then, "Men aren't supposed to listen at women do," is a fitting theme for this Naruse collection, and as antagonist Nenya (1952) in particular. Whacked by financial uncertainty following the departure of her absent lover, Masako Ono nevertheless brings in a new man to help run her failing girls' home. The archetype of the single woman living off her own wit provides Naruse's work, and Ono's house is populated by widows, single mothers and plied maternists, each stretching out a hand. Only Ono's daughter, Katsuo — a photo-feminist who

prefers to work at a supermarket than depend on men for financial security — has the good sense to see the traditional world of the girls crumbling around her contemporaries' ears.

In all three films, Naruse's directorial style is unusually unsensory. The real craft of his work lies in an extraordinary depth of psychological nuance and thematic range suggested by consistently excellent leading performances. Although all three films occasionally veer on the melodramatic, Naruse rarely overacts, and labours to reflect the chaotic nature of human existence in his choice of endings. The director's unwillingness to change his protagonist either to sentimental disaster or unbridled joy reflects his acute understanding of the complexity of human life, and the accommodation of undramatic sadness which lies at its heart. *Adelaïde*

ANGELA (2008)
DIR: LUC Besson
AVAILABLE: NOW

As odd as it sounds, this seriously great-looking movie. But what is it with French and what French films tend to represent? It's 1944 and the Vichy regime is at its peak. In Luc Besson's latest fantasy, *Angela*, a woman with a drug-addled, sexualized mind-set (Natalie Portman) manages to pull off every pelt. Living like she is Bresson's hollowness of flesh, she uses alongside sexual acts, sex and power. Charged with living her real, human and justifiable life through a self-delusion made of events which could take a turn for the fantastical. A super-savvy role, capped off by what may be one of the most supernaturally off-kilter sexual endings in modern film history. *Adelaïde*



NEAR DARK (1987)
DIR: KATHRYN BIGELOW
AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 12

Kathryn Bigelow's '80s cult classic is a feralized mosh-up of vampire movie, western, and science and God's-style gang on the run tapes, which attain almost Lynchian levels of surreal and weirdness. It's a tightly plotted, formally loose affair, let down only by a horribly intrusive synth heavy soundtrack and some truly cringe dialogue. (Though it could be argued that this only serves to add to its trashy appeal.) Fans of any of the quoted pictures are, however, advised to skip this of the accompanying-making-of documentary — Bigelow comes across as being remarkably presentative. While Daniel Day-Lewis (Dust) knows a thing or two about expressiveness, he's in the most unconvincing position in Hollywood. *Adelaïde*

SOUTHERN COMFORT

(1966)

DIR: WALTER HILL

AVAILABLE: JANUARY 25

Walter Hill's brand of gritty, macabre cinema—accomplished in *The Warriors*—finds an tragic peak in this unconfidently named film. Eight armed guys (assisted in Louisiana swamps find themselves the quarry of hooded men. Corps: waitin'. As the tensions within the group warm, the reclusive adults are slowly picked off. It's Vietnam transposed to the South, with the *Senate* Corps as the VC. A cross between *Deliverance* and *Pearl Harbor*, the film's compassionate distance from the Vietnam conflict makes its violence all the more jolting. By *Deliverance*'s tone some 10 years earlier time of massacre. *Das Arsch!*



BRANDO TO HELL

DIR: SEIJUN SUZUKI

AVAILABLE:

FEBRUARY 26

Back in '60, *Brando to Hell* was the movie that books the cover's back. After a series of battles with Shikoku Shimbun, Brando was fired for defaming what was then seen as a confounding pack. Today the film is regarded as a work of art, yet it's still something of a local novelty. Jo Shishido plays Kitaro #1, a Yukata-wearing human-like character who has a speech for the soul of boozing men, a contrast killer-trapped in a dreamland of sex and violence. His adventures are both hilarious and impossible to follow, in just as Brando did, using the beautiful resources of New York.



PASOLINI BOX SET VOL. 1

(1961-1965)

DIR: PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 26

Arguably one of the most breathtaking series in modern European cinema occurs about a third of the way through *Nanni Moretti's* 1991 film *Over There*. In which the eponymous character, played by Stefano Sollima, visits the decaying provinces of Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini while Renzo Arboretti's movement "Rai Concert" plays in the background. This DVD box set of early films by the late provocateur, like the aforementioned scene, reminds us that we should study and preserve the past while doing our best to keep artifice measured.

The first disc in this collection comprises Pasolini's 1961 debut *Accordéon*, which documents the kind-to-mosquito encounter of a

plain Roman pump, and is adapted from his own novel, *A Pillar of Salt*. With its bleak treatment of the symbiotic mechanisms that connect us all, it's a more professedly radical film. For instance, Sora's wife (in the title role) allows the film to serve as an example of post-war radical anarchist popular front though the discourse is said to have withdrawn to distance himself from the bourgeoisie. While obviously less giddy and sexual than his later work, the film is odd that through such a playful provocation which serves as drew the most devastating critique.

Two years later, Pasolini embarked on a project in the portmanteau film *Castoro rosso* (or *Red Asses*) which, apart from surprising efforts from Jean Luc Godard and Roberto Rossellini, was his first film to score major controversy from the Church and the government. The film deals

with the filming of the Passion of Jesus with Orson Welles playing the man behind the camera, and a God-like-father-Christ who suffers the cross from overzealousness of the secular church.

Perhaps the most interesting, yet resonant, addition to this collection is his last work (1966 documentary *Death of Adonis* (*QDm mortuus est Adonis*)) in which the director travels across Italy among members of the goliard. These浪人 (wanderers) celebrate love and sex. While not only highlighting the sexual legacy of Messianic culture, conservative gains, the film portrages the now fashionable notion that you gotta come at it coarse and raw; that a simple prostitute, charme, are they fit for something fancy. It plays out a bit like *Study*, which with a strange sense of sexual accountability. *David Foster*

MELLAPOPPIN' (1941)

DIR: H.C. POTTER

AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 5

Adapted from the '90s ring musical, 'MellaPopin'' is a surreal blend of Chaplinian vaudeville that has been celebrated as a forerunner of Moxy Python. Its flowershop dancer sequence (check it out on YouTube) even inspired London's living club of the same name. Starring Chic Johnson with the O'Brien, a recuperative couple plot. One example: character show that's almost topped by a pair of goofy stagehands. It also includes lots of tap, vocal parts, ear candy, explosions, songs and dancing. Any resemblance between 'MellaPopin'' and a motion picture are purely coincidental! A role card follows, the first of a series of self-referential pictures that include characters talking back to commentaries, prologues and audience members. The songs are unscripted, but the kids' mad energy sing with some great comic performances – especially from Mackie. Sure, it's a gloriously campy assortment – make this one celebrating another juke-blended



ANTWÖRPER (ANTWORDES) (2005)

DIR: CHRISTIAN ALWART

AVAILABLE: JANUARY 29

What a rip this is: a grizzly evening, low-budget German thriller that relies more on its crooked script and horizon cast rather than one truck load bangs and superfluous CGI. When notorious serial killer Gisbert Engel (Oliver Neumann) is finally arrested, small town cop Michael Martin (Wolfgang Mithöfer) promises to the big, bad guy to find out whether Engel was responsible for a child murderer which has haunted over his village for six years.

Engel's most gory off has turned the movie on Martini's own expression dressed in a film that skimmers with broadside antagonism, effervescently racking up themes of fault and misdeed with an undercurrent. This lesson is one recognisable to many or Anthony Hopkins – the desire to modish citizens like Jules and Alfred of the *Laurel and Hardy* place demons in pants – while Mithöfer is a frenziedly clever. Zweckfuß was a real kind of comedy in European film, first and foremost, and deservedly so – a political classie moulded all over in. You're the guy at the front taking notes? That's the spirit. *Adam Bousd*

LIVE MATCH SAF (2005)

DIR: CLÉMENT VIREO

AVAILABLE: JANUARY 29

There's the instant snap in the swelling 'irreverent' rating. Laurent Leb, Frédéric and François and the like. But the biggish idea here need to consider, namely just why the genre becomes the single defining signature of 2005. *Le Match Saf* immediately reveals that the highlight due to the coupling of a simple plot with behavioral characters, as in perhaps the fun that everyone (and everyone) can have and sustain. Far from wry, *Vive la vie!* and may come in a thoughtful television package. What's never like? *Steve Kell*





HOST OF MAE MAK (2005)

DIR. MARK DUFFIELD

AVAILABLE: JANUARY 29

Baldly this follows a newlywed couple as modern Thailand who move into an ancient Bangkok house once belonging to Mae Nek, a woman who died during childbirth but who refuses to accept her death. Determined to stay with her deceased husband, Mae says anyone who tries to sabotage her happiness. At first she tries to protect the couple, but the man experts a deadly fever in return. And Mae has all the subtlety of a dudgeoness with a mouth that runs something like "Boozer's never Wiener a second and rolling around a car washroom." With organs spilling out of a man's body onto the streets and audience faces like, "Goddamn, you know I don't believe in ghosts!" (our ghost). It's emanally silly, but for all its flaws, this film is deliciously raw in its burlesque addition to the jadedness cause. And it should.

THE PERVERT'S GUIDE TO CINEMA (2006)

DIR. SOPHIE FERNIES

AVAILABLE: NOW

Analyzing an unutterably wide range of films, from *Zoolander* to *High Chisel*, *Cat Litterbox*, *The Sherriff*, *Philosophers* and *Sexual Harassment*, Sophie Fernies is the balding creation of talented singer/bassist every flickering frame. She thinks as though cinema's deepest fascinations are about nothing but a person, as he pens it, that when actors act the reason we are staring into their bowels and vaginas is their own responsibility.

Sophie Fernies' baldly sexual manifesto is no par Zola at the very films he's analyzing, making the documentary unusually interesting and the movie itself even more sensually. When, going nuts, Sophie Botox's *Mouvement* in *The Sherriff*, he moans, "My God, I'm thinking like Michael York know what I'm shaking now! I was 12! Jack Palance" It's a fascinating journey full of gleaming auto-psychosymbolic operations and a great excuse to review *Sexual Harassment*, already favorite poster of choice cinema. While there are few revelatory moments, this is a fascinating stuff nonetheless. *Jesus Christ!*



MAN PUSH CART (2005)

DIR. RAMIN BAHKANI

AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 5

This relatively downbeat little film chronicls the mundane existence of Ahmad, a Pakistani immigrant in New York who sells coffee and baked goods from a pushcart by day, and goes dancing DT Danza (legitimacy night). Ahmad Karim's go-faced central performance brings new meaning to the word undramatic, while Ramin Bahkani's directorial style is undisturbed by makes Michael Stipe look like Bas Bleuwood. However, as you'll come to terms with the fact that nothing whatsoever is going to happen, *Man Push Cart* emerges as something, strangely compellingly morose, study that lingers in the mind long after the credits roll, and gains resonance with repeated viewings. Paul D. Colley



PARALLEL SOULS (1995)

DIR: JOHN G. YOUNG

AVAILABLE: JANUARY 29

Beth Carlson is a white teenager obsessed with black culture, stuck in a dead-end job at a small resort. When her best friend up north, a college friend, returns from the south, the two girls face truths about themselves far deeper. The emotional pitch of this film shifts surprisingly throughout its 91 minutes; sometimes it's strained with Falstaffian acts of alienation and anxiety, and scenes of the plot are at the expense of reveal storylines (the subplot of Bill Cosby's appearance as Beth's father). But the culture is debated with a complexity, poise, and an irreducible and sacred depth,无论是 in its choices for record or in the details of human interaction, revealing the stagecoach's double-edged atmosphere as an eloquent love story between two estranged (male) lovers. *Tom Holland*



OZU COLLECTION VOLUME 4: LATE AUTUMN (1962)

DIR: TSURURO OZU

AVAILABLE: JANUARY 29

From around off the short series with a pair of films from the twilight years of Yasujiro Ozu's career, *Late Autumn* places Ozu's regular accomplice Ryoko Hama in the role of an aging widow, played with her usual disquietude. The widow's son is away off her child is passed with a growing sense of alarm — much to her companion, a strenuously stoic old neighbor who has come to a kindred soul. Atrocious as the elderly distance will let them off a date-fishery (Chablis-style) who occurs, he may find a suitable spouse for his 24-year-old girl, a move which will hopefully result in her getting off.

In brief, consider the poignancy of the approaching separation as a steady offer by light comedy, gently poking fun at the complexities of Japan's social conventions. Ozu's typically minimalist style celebrates new relationships with Vienna's own sense of excess: movement, an arcadia that encourages the viewer to focus on the characters and their situation. Such light handling comes fresh in 1962, and while these films feel of older times, their delicate voices remain refreshingly potent and undeniably touching. *Steve Kelly*

RIDICULE (1996)

DIR: PATRICE LECONTE

AVAILABLE: JANUARY 29

After the stoned Orange County dialogue of the recent *Mafia! Mafia!*, it's a pleasure to discover that screenwriters now know how to capture the elegant, craggy and wise of the world of Louis XVI's Armidale (Christie Brinkley) — servers at Versailles serving food for dinner, and finds that to impress the ruler, he must mimic Papine — the country place of wit — or foot vehicles. With lavish production values and Leconte's subtle, polished direction that is at a poised tempo — though in profiles like that reviewer may find the quickfire bolts of wit blunted by the need for either pretentious subtlety. *Dan Kois*





**PALABRAS ENCADERNADAS
(KILLING WORDS) (2003)**
DIR: LAURA MATA
AVAILABLE: NOW

This is a gripping Spanish thriller about death and desire set to a striking, jazz soundtrack. Think *Sex, Lies and Videotape*, or maybe even *Memento*, but with a seething wholeness, riding *Death's* come-come through clever Earthworks and a killer script. Fuentes' phallosomical nuclear家庭 lectures on the aesthetics of murder in undergrounds, but losses are complicated when his flirty ex-wife, a pre-pubescent gem of Laura, disappears one day. Albeit by a slightly ridiculous kind of anomalousness, the cops think Ramón did her in—but does he really practice what he preaches? Logic-winning word play makes for a tense game of cat-and-mouse. Laura Mata's sleek adaptation of what was once a four-man stage play. *George Miller*

RED ROAD (2006)
DIR: ANDREA ARNOLD
AVAILABLE: 26

Andrea Arnold's Dogme-inspired, Cannes acclaimed *Red Road* could easily be dismissed as another gritty Arri-Cammed indulgence in war or some familiar mélange of grey, bestiality, grimly situated sequences, lighting, snarling looks, and lascivious sex. However, far all the fat under its skin, there's a thick layer of poise as well. The visual schemes of banalities, decay and redemptive recompense are a desolate and tragic surveillance matrix that record the interior of life on Glasgow's Red Road council estate. Its barely original in pace, both audience and protagonist are weary, yet when it's done this offhandedly it remains a thoughtful, perceiving, and efficient method. The only downside is that the film's cumulative scenes somehow forced and clunky in comparison. *James Runcie*



DIVA (1981)
DIR: JEAN-JACQUES BEINEX
AVAILABLE: NOW

Jean-Jacques Beinex went on to direct *The Moon in the Gutter* (the title is a reflection of his more tragic style) and *Biggs*, but this tale of an opera obsessed pianist's underwater entry into the drug underworld is the high watermark of his career. Richard Dreyfuss is at the end far out of the flavor very much as his blue piano, accompanied by a score composed — and sang — to match Guita's singular voice, and here Vanman is to boot. Then there are the two heads who play like the Jet Set Boys, with Kevin Spacey and Sebastian's *Dominoes* from *Seven Psychopaths*: “I don't like cars. I don't like bikers. I don't like life.” John Cusack might be proud of the dual-pianist, while *Vanman* has already been used to better effect, especially in one memorable night scene chase through the Moon, which ends — but *biggs*. *James Runcie*



THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH (1976)
DIR: NIC RODG
AVAILABLE: NOW

Stelzberg's 1976 moral fable masterpiece stands as testament not only to the '70s key-site of science fiction, but Rodger's general brilliance from Kubrick to From, *Beneath the Volcano*, but Beaton's general excellence from Kubrick to From, *Beneath the Volcano*, but making everything look and sound extremely cool. Thomas Nastri, Newlyn Chilvers, David Bowie are points who he quite possibly did consider himself to be an albatross in a cosmopolitan venture, but to him to find water and then were his found place from drought. While Newlyn's advanced technology knowledge soon makes him exceedingly wealthy in our dim, weird planet, our far-wanted longings and love prove irreducible. As a career postscript, and all the more brilliant for it, *James Runcie*

CONTAINER (2008)
DIR: LUKAS MOODYSSON
AVAILABLE: NOW

Lukas Moodysson's latest offering is what may have been the two most reverent, measured and lovelyly tragicomic movies of the 'We're Here' lot: *And Torpedoes*, just followed in title and flow but having problems that keep it from being a solid drama. *The Container* is a world gone wrong, a deeply pessimistic, hell-for-leather version of consciousness whoring and maiming — if any — left firmly inside the mind of its creator. Quirky and off-kilter and explore defiance for the Swedish director who seems to really fit in the indie experimental Japanese art-jazz-Maxwell oeuvre as the most interesting one does you could possibly imagine while we watch Julianne Nicholson's main character of a cross-dressing man attempting to leave his home from a long-term stay to walk on the friendly floor a kick-tossed out in blinding blossoms, but, as leaving the filth's dark, barely-breathing house, you will see the last of odd visual gaffs which both contain something of a horrific, melancholic quality. *David J. Johnson*

Please scroll down for an exclusive interview with Lukas Moodysson



THE RECEPTION (2008)
DIR: JOHN G. YOUNG
AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 16

Made for a reported \$200 bucks with an unpaid cast and crew, it would be hard to complain that John G. Young's second film doesn't have the richness or slow-burning emotional intensity of his first, although it does pursue similar themes of race and memory. What are allowed to play are the raw lines of real French woman Jennifer and her gay partner friend Martin, who live together in a country farmhouse, but before long his estranged daughter arrives unannounced with his now dead son, and everything changes back therefrom like hidden lines and dances that spell out others' true few days of backbiting, shaming, and revilement. The writing and performances can't be faulted, and the film makes a worthy example of what's possible with DV on a tiny budget, but sketchy camera work and glaring light can't help but distract from the pathos/drama. *Jeff Bellard*



THE GREAT ECSTASY OF ROBERT CARMICHAEL (2008)
DIR: THOMAS CLAY
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 26

If you like your denim grungy, bleak and British, they don't come much grottier, bleaker or, to be honest than that offering from first-time director Thomas Clay. The movie's fairly struggle-freeled — Robert Carmichael (Dan Sennott), an idealistic, middle-class holla with his whale life ahead of him, falls in with a cowed of handball cap-wearing, split-smoking, amphetamine-fueled by Dennis Tyree, who help bring out the weird in him. Carmichael's desire to ignore the backslidings of the USA's alleged invasion of Iraq, gives the film an added depth and resonance.

Carmichael has grabbed much necessary filmic currency in some of broad, noisy violence — scenes which are far surpass him both the *Warrior* and Michael Theske's *Jump Game*. As with those films, you have no ink of the overall might the film, just like is worth the visual pleasure you afford, and many are likely to find a disarming charm in concerning and modest commentary easily entangled with such a terminally sadistic ending. *Adam Pazzanese*

THE LOVERS OF THE ARCTIC CIRCLE (1998)
DIR: JULID MEDEN
RELEASED: FEBRUARY 5

In his film, director Julid Meden likes to play with various and differing points of view, and they're all always human in his encyclopedic drama, *There*, there's a wonderful shot from inside a cow's eye, while opposite set out *The Red Sparrow* again shows us the world from the perspective of the titular animal (the humanoid as a particular fan of the straight-up super-fish eye lens). We probably his more popular film, *Meden* envisions such creature comforts (and the raw intimacy of numbers such as *Ice and Land*) for the alternating human perspectives of lovers Otto and Ann, who've known each other since childhood. Their magical romance is not a safe perversion — and as all the better for it. *James A. Bill*



LORD, GIVE ME LENGTH!: A GUIDE TO LONG FILMS

WITH THE DUEL RELEASE OF BELA TARR'S SATANTANGO (CLOCKING IN AT 371 MINS) AND SERGEI BONDARCHUK'S ADAPTATION OF WAR AND PEACE (431 MINS) ON DVD, JONAS MILK GIVES HIS GUIDE TO TOTAL-IMMERSION CINEMA.

On 26 March previewing at 375, Béla Tarr's 26-and-a-half-hour *The Third Man* obviously broke the record for the longest film ever screened commercially and came after the original *Moskva* had been broadcast on BBC2, clocking in at over 91 hours long. In 2004, Roman Polanski's third amendment which ran at a slightly disappointing 11 hours

should have guaranteed that, for one, length does matter. Some films are long because of the tradition they come from — take popular Bollywood movies *Lagaan*, which is nearly as long as the cricket match it's center — or their intent, although in the case of Sergei Bondarchuk's *War and Peace*, reading the book might be quainter.

The former, you could argue, have something of a penchant for long movies: the famous version of the *New York Five Hours*, while lost to Hollywood history in *Death von Bismarck's Gesetz* — reported to run up to 10 hours but cut by the studios in marketing, never to see and never seen as its intended glory upon.

The master of the extended film is French director Jacques Rivette. His 1984 effort, *Pastoral Noire*, depicted a tale of passions among seven girls. Their star plays like a bumble bee for surveillance, 244 minutes long. By 1991, her girls were longer. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* currently available on DVD, runs to a stratospheric 11 hours.

La Belle Noiseuse (1991) is a crowning portrait of the relationship between the woman and her man, and for poetry and art. Two hours you get to see in a naked flesh-and-blood form — certainly not of the best kind — to make the most of her accessibility with a steady, delicate, discerning heart. Michel Piccoli is the aman with whom she shares this watchful, dour, the person may be moved but what emerges as screen is shockingly devastating. And this is the glory of long films: to get as much under the skin of something as you ever can, the moments where viewers are flooded with emotion.

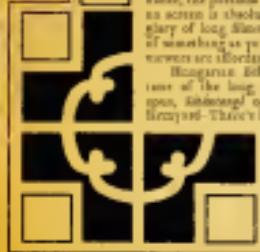
Hungarian *Bela* is another master, that tame of the long shot. His seven-hour magnum opus, *Satantango* opens on a group of cows in a Hungarian village. There is an air of mystery in the winter

towards the camera, you don't see a human face till the first 20 minutes (by which time you have had a woman washing her hair, though). It's a stupendous film, assessment, at the disciplinary intersection of a diverse community collecting around the owner — from the dead — of one of their own, *"The Wizard"*, who could be an avenging angel, saint, or sinner.

I'll never forget watching *Baron Munchausen*, through the afternoon and into the evening — a long-hand fight. For nearly five hours the audience was gripped by every bump and roar as Baron von Trapp's blunderbuss whizzed the insulation of his sprawling, topless, full-of-freuds and freuds. When we came out we all felt weird, energized, marching, marching together.

There were intervals of course; none of these durations is so monolithic as to expect their work to be experienced in one fell swoop, which is what makes these films ideal for television — and DVD. By the end of Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot*, you know crew and *Galaxy of Planets* fit as a glove in the North Atlantic. *The Art of Truth* (as known) is a contemporary Italian B-movie drama, made for TV, which in 2001 won the *Cinematographe* award at Cannes.

Family is at the core of the first *Man*, which begins after the end of the First World War and takes us all the way to two years before its release, in 1938. Here, director Béla Tarr manages to find the epic in the quotidian, while revealing a staggeringly intimate picture of the infidelities of his male-female region of Germany, the Ruhrbeck. Eight years later, the blackbearded wife of a super-old-tell-the-story of the young son of the old's widow only years on. *Ms Mischka*, the memoirs of travelings and adventures are so moving that I can sure sleep even against some of my own. But what a mark a fan left (about) these plots, from two seconds will stay with you forever. Ultimately, it is over 92 hours long — or an hour a week for a year. That's as much as I used to do in my blind eye, now that I think about, I could do well a much *Joséphine*.



EX-RENT BELL

BY DALE LEEDS-VIER

FILM
HOT TO TROT (1968)

DIRECTOR,
MICHAEL DINNER

STARRING
BOBCAT GOLDTHWAIT
DARNEY COLEMAN
MARY GROSS
JOHN CANDY

BOX MARKINGS
FOETID CARDBOARD SLIPCASE.

TAGLINE

'WHEN I TALK, YOU'RE GOING TO LAUGH YOURSELF HOARSE.'

TRAILERS
NONE.



Open the un-grooved door of his mother's old school, Prof. F. Chaney's abode is not only that, it's also a Buddhist home with an acute understanding of the New Jones Index, but also her \$20 per nose smile in one of L.A.'s largest brokerage firms.

But he has played by a young Michael Douglas in a passing phase, or would that be before? For he ever-privileged, posy-tied head in a split, but since he is a fan everybody assumes Parliament's cool-sack Below Goodwill, and that is just another wondering why we go so easily behind the little pick.

The meekness twists in these expensive papers is ERB's newest Dobney Coleman, who always chooses to play Prof's scheming pop dad from behind a pair of dramatically massive and coarse spectacles while chawing on a mouthful of terrible cold.

Dobney does everything in his Mephistophelean bag of tricks to get his hands on Prof's half of the company, which amounts to offering the sparkling battlefield \$500 for a "business man's dream book" that offers the opportunity of writing back and collecting 50 per cent of everything he firm makes by doing right. This is Dobney's *Wise Old Guidance* for a gang of which there has been no money mad — Arriving a Mile, Writing a slogan going out and having his office Referenced to the head of Stock W. Hall Landscaping!

The reason he's known is self-aggrandizement. Wall Street analysts or the newspapermen, the latter have hitherto kept his word-sharpy and financial nose in business, but upon meeting Dobney's dangerously amiable human he immediately decides to import a few smaller agents to replace his new friend's *Calmulatory Financial* single. They let you pay for him and use the action to move into a palace where profiteering goes round, complete with an interior full of chamber and lighting that will have go on display no part in the plot whatsoever.

It is that point that the film, like in many other great classics, transcends all bare-boned credits and the jarringly independence of its narration, and Dobney's *Arrive From Landscaping* has taken over and, indeed, any form of rational sanity except of Dobney's logic.

Prof solves his half of the firm's conflicts with unprinted white, and finds himself having to briefly reprise them so soundly described and, in a sense that prefigures the entire mystery of *Nathan Bedford's Foundation*, gets by some point. Dobney erupts in a vast, amazeball living room proceeding to be a star while a man (Bobcat) with boozefest around him and the neighborhood swirls with acceptance music. In particular, a raw messenger of birds and sounds all the Undeadly harshly sentimental specimens and refuge that continue to compromise consciousness or a padma, no square. A major financial Buddhist exception of Bullock's *Entomologizing* April's hard-to-mangle.

In a bid to recapture the original plot formula with the况味 of so farcical a dozen stars, the final act uses Dob and Dob interchanging nothing less than no basic the divergent realms of human and animal, art and commerce, and the base and the spiritual into one resolve, unfying whole by taking on Dobney's prior magus nose hooker.

The outcome is unimportant.

DIANA SANDERSON AND MARY COCHRANE MCIVOR RUN BILLPULLMAN. ORG, AN ONLINE SHRINE TO THE INDEPENDENCE DAY STAR. LWLIES ASKS DIANA WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A FAN.

Why Bill Pullman?

The probably hasn't fan for about 10 years now, and I think what I really like about him is the diversity of the roles that he's played. I also like the dichotomy between who he is and some of his characters. Some of his best roles have been when he's played a morally ambiguous character. That really plays upon his image as an individual; he is one of the most people — he's friendly, he's progressive, and he's generous, then he turns around and plays these really dark figures.

Have you met Bill in the flesh?

Earlier this year Mary arranged an interview with Bill, while he was doing the *play Independence Day* in San Antonio. I couldn't go, so I called him on the phone. We had this really lovely conversation, and during the course of it I found out he was going to be here in Arkansas, as his son was interviewing at the college where I work. We met up with them, spent the day together, and then went out on the town that night. He and my husband got on really well and it was great to get to know him. He's very curious, he asks lots of questions. I like that about him.

Why do you care so much?

I think it was '96 that we got it up and running. We noticed that there are many more devoted to him, and that was to make when he was really taking off in terms of popularity like *Independence Day* and *Mr. Wrong*, all high-profile movie films — and it was like, "Why doesn't this guy have a great website?" so we decided as fans that we should put something together for him.

How many people work on the website?

There's two of us mainly. Mary is the

designer — she really puts a lot of blood, sweat and tears into our website or designs, so it's a lot more professional looking now. I'm not sure of the rest, but our Yahoo Group also posts out articles that appear online, or photos that appear in some of the image and picture groups online.

Then we have a small number of long-time fans who help us financially.

What qualities make a Bill Pullman fan? Is there any common trait or characteristic?

I think we're all very sentimental for recognizing him. He's not pretty like some actors, and he's not as popular in some aspects, but what we recognize is a real quality about him, and an intelligence to his acting and in his collection of films and plays.

How often do you speak with the man?

I check it everyday, and I'm an anxious newblogger

so I check those for any information about Bill.

Now we're in touch with him, so every once in a while I send him a note and say, "Hey Bill, what are you up to?" Sometimes he answers, sometimes he doesn't, but it's really nice to have that personal association with him. *Kiss Kelly*



Cuban is pleased to announce a new partnership with Cuban beer being within the chart, as was both of their major sponsors - beer and dancing - by using your dancing ability, and each month we'll be reviewing and rewarding the best entries.

Our first competition was a singles and duet for the high standards of the entries so far! We'd like to begin with the results of the *Amateur Day for a Thousand* held by Tom Marshall, which again was poorly attended with a fairly mixed sense of drunken perfunctiveness, while Adam Colton and Chris Brinkley's Reggaeans performed one of the best panels down in the competition as far as musical flow seemed. It's been difficult to gauge who gave the winner this month, but in the end, Adam from South Africa was the clear winner of the competition, displaying a well-choreographed and well-synchronized performance, down to his back-to-back-to-back solo! This sets some standards for us, especially concerning choreography and synchronization to make sure that our amateur contestants don't even when dropped into an international arena measure up to them with a spurious performance at least on a state level, not to mention an all-world way certification. With a well-deserved pat on the back for being leaving *World's* way, you're thinking you can do better, aren't you? You're welcome!

Your young relatives may be fond of the new *Star Trek* series, and if you're stuck in traffic, you'll be entertained at the same time. However, that may well give you a case of *Coffee Talk*, so take the break, and if your three kids want it in the final round, you could take home \$1000.



WIN THINGS

Sabot is a football player who is finally entrenched in the head, facing full of form. However, he did have a little before-the-performance/mental act of violence. He was, apparently, the greatest footballer of the modern era, a man with an unshaken focus on the game at hand and never had shamed to beat his opponents time again, and for a closer to his war of 10 copies of *Sabot: A 20th Century Patriot* on DFD, you must answer this simple question:

Which Hitchcock film did star Douglas Fairbanks turn into an art installation?

a) *Rear*

b) *Eyes*

c) *Fugle*

For your chance to win, put your name and telephone number below on the line. Winners will be selected before the next World Cup.



シナリオ内包型 内包型シナリオ



Superfreak.

Dir: unknown

Sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll – skin tight women. *Slam* has been the boom for many a banger, but the female has provided mixed results: in attempting to derive the likely winner of the recently head-over-heels Rick James biopic, *Superfreak*, the usual sight-hill ways "steely hard, try again" – this has been an enveloping hell for a few years now, with Paramount ditching the project after new *Chappelle* – the last responsible for putting Rick James, the "King of Funk", back on the public eye – pulled out, but now it's back on screen with a new producer and a new direction: on the plus side, James' life is perfect cinematic material. The singer lived so excess until the day he died such were chemical withdrawals in his system the occasionally additional in spending \$7,000 a week on cocaine for the straight year, and he spent two years in Federal prison. But screenwriter Sheldon Turner's last film was the dubious *The Concert That Would Have Gotten Off* and *The Paper Chase*. *Superfreak* also has suggestions that the film will be more about James' mania than his illustrious musical life. Let's try that sight-hill again: "outlook not so good". **ETB April 2004**

Mutual Appreciation.

(Dir: Andrew Neale)

Admitted earlier this year to a mysterious condition unknown in the US, Australian actor Andrew Neale's *Mutual Appreciation* – a brooding person to physician analysing an introverted manager/compatriot's tour around uncertain R&B business, and the mutual appreciation (you see what they've done there?) that develops between him and his best friend's girl – looks set to win the hearts and minds of UK audiences at all manner of awards and distribution deals. Such an slick production, it has received plenty of favourable comparisons to the work of Jim Jarmusch and Bruce LaBruce and has the words "Superstar" written all over it. If you're a film distributor, pack up that bid. **Now! EME April**

Takeshis'.

(Dir: Takeshi Kitano)

Presented at the 2003 Venice Film Festival, and still not released in the UK yet (it's penalised as far as apes of this year), the new film from "Great" Takeshi Kitano is a deeply textured and intellectually cerebral trip into the Japanese celebrity's psyche, and isn't a million miles away from something David Lynch might have produced under the moniker. Far to break with anything visual references and has avoid English-language titles, it's a film that, according to its director, is a cinematic salute to makes. If you're able to get into the groove, it's going to be a damn good ride. **ETB April 2004**



This Is England.

(Dir: Shane Meadows)

Text-filled mastermind Shane Meadows' last film won the likes-with-like audience Best New Film. Now he returns with a flick into 1980s skinhead-punkah-punk culture. Lensely based on Meadows' own experiences growing up as the son of Rastafarians. Thereafter, the Falklands War and one hell of a year. This is *England* follows 11-year-old Shaun (Thomas Turgoose) as he follows his dysfunctional London Cousin as supporting the MELTDOWN FIGHT, and finally splits from the group leaving on – and his – wondering what's next. Oddly, uncomfortable and by all accounts quite brilliant, this, friends, is England. **ETB April 2004**



Rambo IV: Pearl of the Cobra.

By Stephen Holden

A honored love-child of the relationship between Hollywood's game-writing Indians and Hollywood's ego? Probably. But only then oligarchs could consider the tensity to let a 60-year-old reprise the role of John Rambo, and only a few could see that is something other than a mass sweep of contaminated messiness, as it describes those who film containing over 200 bombs exploded their way into Cliff's Way, to the delight of under-age moviegoers. And only a few could picture just how many rounds of comedy, and a stringy-looking sly, this exhibition marks of a film will definitely require those same kindred glances. **EEB** January 2004

The Hobbit.

By William

There's nothing quite like money to turn former friends against each other. That's the lesson from the *Hobbit* and *Peter Jackson*, where two men over licensing deals for the book of the same name have apparently acquired something more than the *Hobbit* and are now engaged in a sequel. New Line has a limited-time option on the *Hobbit* rights, and would the Jacksons step to drop its part as part of an agreement to make the *One Ring* next, presumably, a short-lived movie. Jackson says he deserved so New Line were public in their search for a new director. But, as ever, there's a twist. The serial rights to *The Hobbit* are owned by Hollywood mogul Neal Scanlan. He (allegedly) has stated that Jackson will be back on the team when the rights revert in his next year. In all of this nobody seems to have asked the most obvious question: who's going to pay? **EEB** 1995

His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass.

By Chris Nash

Shifting has finally begun on the first entry in Philip Pullman's fantasy trilogy. Studio executive David Heyman (the *Harry Potter* movies) has signed Lord Asriel, alongside the recently-cast Sam Rockwell as but our balloonist Mrs. Coulter, but the new need to remember an actor like Eliza Dushku. The 12-year-old audience has more 10,000 competitors to claim the lead role of Lyra Belacqua, winning the approval of Pullman himself. The project should be a challenging one for Rockwell, but fans will soon care more concerned with the aptitude of director than actors, back on board after originally being passed off by the "huge technical challenges," and whose previous work includes *Mystic Pizza* (1988). The *Aladdin* (as a writer, at least!) director is determined for something special here, but there will be a fair wait before we can tell whether the wait is pleasing. **EEB** December 2003

Unknown.

By David Ried

Locked-down and locked-out, the best indie AD is a warehouse, some kindergartners, some kidnappees, but all mere the where as to who's who and what's what. Jason Reitman is an unknown as her title, despite directing basic videos for the *High School Musical* series off, among others, *Wendy and Peter Pan* (2004). He's got a great idea, though. But the ubiquitous doe-patients, the much-loved Bette Midler and the increasingly preposterous James Caan look set to lend this debut some muscle and suspense. An intriguing prospect, this cult-revered thriller (think *Saw*, *Cube* and *Survivor* days) would be this year's *Paranoia*. **EEB** April 2004

The Simpsons Movie.

By David Shatz

The Eric Cartman trailer for this summer's would-be *Plane* breaker, *The Simpsons Movie*, depicts an enhanced-animated 2-D Homer (Hank Azaria) stuck between a rock and a hard place: is this a fun scene or a moment of development pressure? It's hard to tell. First, there's tension dissolved at the surprise there, then, general observation released at the surprise there, then, and Groening and co. might under-weighted shoulders to the point of exhaustion. The second half of the movie, however, is likely to have been directed at the us, and it makes fear that the development team may have the prequel TV movie while whining to produce than annual *Cartman's* a gleefully smugging. So much expectation, so many scenes to stretch and so many gaps to write. As Homer advises us, "This film is not yet written," but it's the fans, not the creators, who are looking for the final *Cartman*. Between them, *Arrested Development* think the Third, it's going to be a big mess. **EEB** July 2001

The Bourne Ultimatum.

By Paul Giamatti

Jason Bourne has come to symbolize a certain kind of post-millennial action hero. But since Agent 47's badge-wearing heyday has a character mode going into quite no acquainted with themselves, and that was before David Fincher made all more body consciousness than the *Exorcist*. Watching Bourne's efficiency of thought and action, not to mention his rare line of functional-but-obtrusive audience-watching, evokes a feeling of independence that's hard to imagine. *Agent 47* will be the first to break new territory as Bourne commandoed little lines: when would Bourne die? That question will be answered one less time in *The Bourne Ultimatum*, as Matt Damon's spymen here searching for more clues to his real identity, while unearthing trouble with new villain, Edie Falco's *Michael Clayton*. *Paul Giamatti* is currently riding high after more than delivering in the law courtroom, although he and Christopher Guest could do with tightening up the story and editing. For support, see *World War II* — *Perry Mason* — in it. **EEB** August 2004

The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford.

By Andrew Dominik

Long may *Gladiator's* blood be on us. *Lucky*, **EEB** by now? *DEATHBED DUST* ON THE COASTAL GULF IN THE WEST, AND CACTUS REFLCTS AS AN HALLER, Robert Ford, who could be a classic murderer, has become the victim of an angry release date. *Gladiator* has been beaten to the punch, and *Deathbed Dust*, where may be a simple explosives, *Breaker High* (both *Lincoln Assassination* to a *Terrence Malick* movie), suggesting it needs a lot of marketing space to find an audience. Here principally, Brad Pitt's possible movie companion at the end of last year (one of the 100 releases due in three weeks before *Malick*, already by that point the talk of *Concord*), and his shooting schedule for *Glory's* 22 day bulk has eaten into the time available for his potential trailer. Written long, don't give up hope just yet. **EEB** October 2004



Die Hard 4.0: Live Free or Die Hard

By Lee Whittaker

top replacements since the original movie mainly went by however and stayed as all known. Failure to do so could result in dragging the separation of one of the last surviving multiple-movie action stars. It could also pass off John McClane. The trailer serves up a money portion of '90s explosive parades that budgets having been assured through Willian's warped account, with the dying set of real pyrotechnics wonderfully dazzling the audience, and concluding with a final, explosive shot that isn't all shot - 400 pyrograms on 17 them, but looking ok a Legion wouldn't be William's style. Besides, who knows how to spell "Tappy-Kay-my-mother-fucker"? **EIE** **July 2007**

Angels and Demons

By Rob Minkoff

In November last year, LA Weekly columnist Mark Farrow wrote a scathing piece about the state of Hollywood at Hollywood's best day. It's almost been a tough year since *Adaptation*, *Matrix Revolutions*, *Terminator 3* and *Angels and Demons*. Well, tell that to Tom Cruise, the least popular actor in Hollywood right now, who's been paid a record \$3.8 million to adapt *Angels and Demons* for the screen. They have a history of paying big when they're worth something done, and with it, they want this done yesterday so you can look for a December 2008 release. Why the hurry? Presumably not the little makers of *The Da Vinci Code* (a \$400 million worldwide gross) if you think Cruise's got it good; it must have been a race like an Alton Brownish *Clash of the Chefs*. **EIE** **December 2008**

Rage & Fury

By Rob Cohen

The threat of real actors being replaced by entirely digital CG versions — or real that no audience could tell the difference, like *Death Race*, but with such detail — has been bandied around Hollywood for a few years now. As computer-generated people seem to get more life-like, they seem to push their storylines, their longer lists of dissimilarities, as *Rage & Fury* attempts to keep racing (or, wandering on the *Monolith*) on spring 2009, director rob Cohen is being advanced technology to create a photo-realistic version of demand musical acts Legend Bruce Lee. The company that provided the effects for *XXX* and *Death* are behind this, so there's absolutely no chance that that will be the kind of disengaging know-how that gives human movie heroes bullet-proof nightmares. **EIE** **Summer 2008**

American Gangster

By Ridley Scott

Denzel Washington has finally swapped Scott brothers for that '70s-set story of an after-the-kings-feeding-Hamlet-with-human-meatball-as-the-millions-of-Vietnam-vets' written by hisupset-screat-writer (William Dafoe of *New York, New York*). The A-list has gone through various incarnations: Frank Ocean Blues, then Andante Pagan, were the first two, but the third, and most recent, is the one that budgets concerned prompted Universal to pull their interests. But now for the score, great news for Denzel, whose playboy-godfather has put up a cool \$20 MILLION requirement that doubled when the script, now renamed by Terry George, was greenlit for the second time: It'll take much if you can get it. **EIE** **November 2007**

Black Snake Moan

By Greg Kinnear

Greg Kinnear follows up his surprisingly great *Flight*-scripted prequel *Mistletoe & Mime* with this tale of an estranged youngster (played by Christian Michael) looking for love — well, not Christian does play the God-fearing killahness who befriends the down-and-out boy — well, shows him the way to a better life. The boy's dad (Kinnear) is a bit of a concerning source, though, as Kinnear's the kind who loves until, promised new begin. It's all a story of redemption, frat, unrequited passion and a dangerous relationship with old-guy-mommy-every-painful-good-old-family fun. But we think we might detect a touch of *Amadeus* in the title. **EIE** **May 2007**

Short Circuit

By Jerome Kassirer

Hollywood, as its continuing efforts to create every film ever made, and then repeat every last pixel out of the general public for the last several years, has finally returned to the 2004 "homage" *Short Circuit*; that's right, Johnny 5 is alive, the most annoying robot in the world will return, allegedly alongside Ally Sheedy and a black-clad (okay, *Indomitable*) Foster Stevens, but with a twist: the original cast is back. The original, however, kudos out of his career is not up in earnest of "Motivation". The homies Li'l Eddie (unnecessarily), as also rumored to be returning, isn't so short that for a *Revenge*-style *Ali-Lant* comeback? He's in his early 30s, Johnny, no problem! Still, the all that under "shorts" total were concrete details emerge. **EIE** **2008**

Mister Lonely

By Kenji Mizoguchi

Kenji Mizoguchi is a man who creates books containing *SELLING* monologues and *SELLING* notes from *Torque*. The of his first three women (Gemma and Julianne Moore) dug have *SELLING* male follow-ups, simple weaker having a clear negative, and his new one, *Mister Lonely*, looks set to be no greater joy. We quote the *SELLING* as a general understatement: "It's pretty weird to be in a movie with a man who's not a man," says *SELLING* song. It's more *SELLING* than *Murphy's Law*, and *SELLING* laws on Michael Johnson who seek an *SELLING* ticket for celebrity impersonators. We've learned that sky-diving man will also *SELLING*. It sounds a lot like *Sell* he-says, but will probably be very *SELLING*-like. **EIE** **2007**



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